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COMICS INTERVIEW

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U FRONT

I remember when THE X-MEN was an early Marvel title — mostly an also-ran but for a brief string of issues drawn by **Neal Adams** and **Barry Smith.** I was serving a stint in the Marvel Bullpen when X-MEN was re-launched, and even copy-edited some of the early **Chris Claremont** issues at the time.

Now it's a hot and heavy property that is at long last about to reach TV and, from there, enter the popular vernacular and perhaps earn the wider recognition of, say, Superman and Batman — or even the Hulk.

I also remember first discovering and reading THE SOUTHERN KNIGHTS — then going on to meet the creators and ending up actually publishing the comic book. The series might have been an independent also-ran, but for the engaging, lite-and-lively scripting of **Henry Vogel** and —later — the noteworthy art of **Mark Propst** and **Willie Peppers,** among others.

Now the Knights are back, in a captivating crossover with the Hero Comics characters — and even here a certain karma is at work, for it so happens I contributed THE CHAMPIONS (as a name) to Marvel, and now years later have lived to see a group called by that name cross over with the Southern Knights.

Will the day come when the Knights ride a tide of comics popularity — when the characters are on TV or in movies, and the group is well-known to the public?

It could happen. I've seen other unlikely — or should I say *uncanny* — events come to pass.

-Dave

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PETER DAVID

It's beginning to feel like I talk to Peter David for publication almost as often as I talk to him just as a friend. This is the second of three interviews for COMICS INTERVIEW I have recently done with Peter. The first, covering his comics adaptation and novelization of the film version of THE ROCKETEER, appeared in CI #94; the third, discussing his work on the upcoming X-FACTOR, as well as INCREDIBLE HULK and STAR TREK, will follow in a few months.

By the way, many people have accused Peter of having three first names and no last one: Peter Alan David. I've always assumed he was just making up for the people like my niece, who have three last names, such as Delaney Pendleton Brown.

Without further ado, Peter David on Wolverine . . .

PATRICK DANIEL O'NEILL: *You're doing the Wolverine feature in MARVEL COMICS PRESENTS that will follow Barry Windsor-Smith's "Weapon X" story. What's the background?*

PETER DAVID: The background is that I was going to do an eight-part Wolverine story in which Wolverine encounters a guy from his past, who beat Wolverine early on in his career, so thoroughly and so badly, that Wolverine has virtually a mental block against taking the guy on. Whenever he sees him, he just starts to freeze up. It's someone that Wolverine has thought about for years and years; he's built him up in his mind as being someone who can beat the shit out of Wolverine without any trouble. Wolverine now encounters the guy again, upon returning to Madripoor — and has to overcome his psychological block in order to confront him.

Originally, it was going to be a fairly straightforward, eight-part superhero-type story, with **Todd McFarlane** drawing it. Todd then got involved with the SPIDER-MAN book, so they put **Sam Kieth** on it. Sam has a dramatically different style from Todd, leaning more toward the horrific, the moody, the creepy style. I felt a story that was originally intended for Todd, now as-

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"I did a story that is Wolverine's answer to TWIN PEAKS."

signed to Sam, had to be tailored to Sam's particular strengths. I spoke to Sam about it, asking, "What would you like to draw?" He said, "I would like to draw a giant hot-dog cart in the shape of a hot dog," and a couple of other bizarre images. They were all such utterly disconnected, disjointed images that I thought, "How am I going to do a hot-dog cart in Madripoor? It doesn't make any sense."

Also, at about that time, TWIN PEAKS had started and *it* was this incredibly bizarre show. I said to myself, "I think I'll do a story that is Wolverine's answer to TWIN PEAKS. This will be one of the most bizarre and outrageous Wolverine stories anybody has ever seen." As a result, that's the story we wound up with.

Let's see if we can do a story that's so weird and filled with symbolism that it will get the fans talking, because we wanted to do something that would be able to follow "Weapon X." That's exactly what we came up with. In order to make the story as bizarre as possible, I only wrote it at three in the morning. *(Laughter.)* I'd go to bed at, like, 11 o'clock at night, set my clock for 3:00 a.m., get up at 3:00 a.m., sit down at the computer and type up a Wolverine story that was virtually stream-of-consciousness. That's what we wound up getting. To my shock, the story actually holds up extremely well — I would have thought it would be extremely disjointed and have virtually no connection from beginning to end. Yet it isn't . . . which surprised me a great deal.

PAT: *Is it still basically a story about someone that Wolverine has a mental block against?*

PETER: Absolutely — that's still the theme, the thrust of the story. But the idea is one thing and the execution is something else again. The execution I've come up with is really, completely off-the-wall.

We have a dream sequence — Wolverine is in an hallucinatory state for three parts out of the eight. There's a lengthy dream sequence in which Wolverine is remembering back to when he first met this guy — except, because it's a dream sequence and Wolverine is hallucinating, it's not an accurate depiction of the way it was. Everything is couched in symbolism: Wolverine is like **James Dean,** the guy he's intimidated by is a brutish gym teacher. They're driving these hot-dog carts — which, of course, has other meanings.

It's really just a very, very strange story that I want people to read and really think about in trying to figure out what is going on, because there are all these underlying layers for people to try to get into it. It's a very unusual and wacked out story.

PAT: *That leads to an interesting question. Is the general audience for Wolverine going to appreciate what you have put into this? What you want them to get out of it?*

PETER: Can you be more specific about what you mean by "general audience"?

PAT: *Wolverine seems to attract a lot of readers who are interested in his slashing, angry, berserker, kick-ass character. That is what they find attractive about him, that is why they read the character. I may be doing them an injustice — but I don't think so — they're not really interested in whatever psychology you as a writer might want to put in for why he is that way. They just like him because he* is.

And from another of David's scripting chores: Pencils from WOLVERINE #9, by Gene Colan.

"Wolverine was definitely un-wussy. Definitely not for

the faint-of-heart — as people are accustomed to saying."

PETER: The whole key to writing is not necessarily giving the readers what they want, but what they should have. If that's patronizing, so be it — but the fact of the matter is, if you always give the readers precisely what they want, they will very quickly become bored and go away. My feeling was, "Let's do something that's really going to try to goose them a little; make them think."

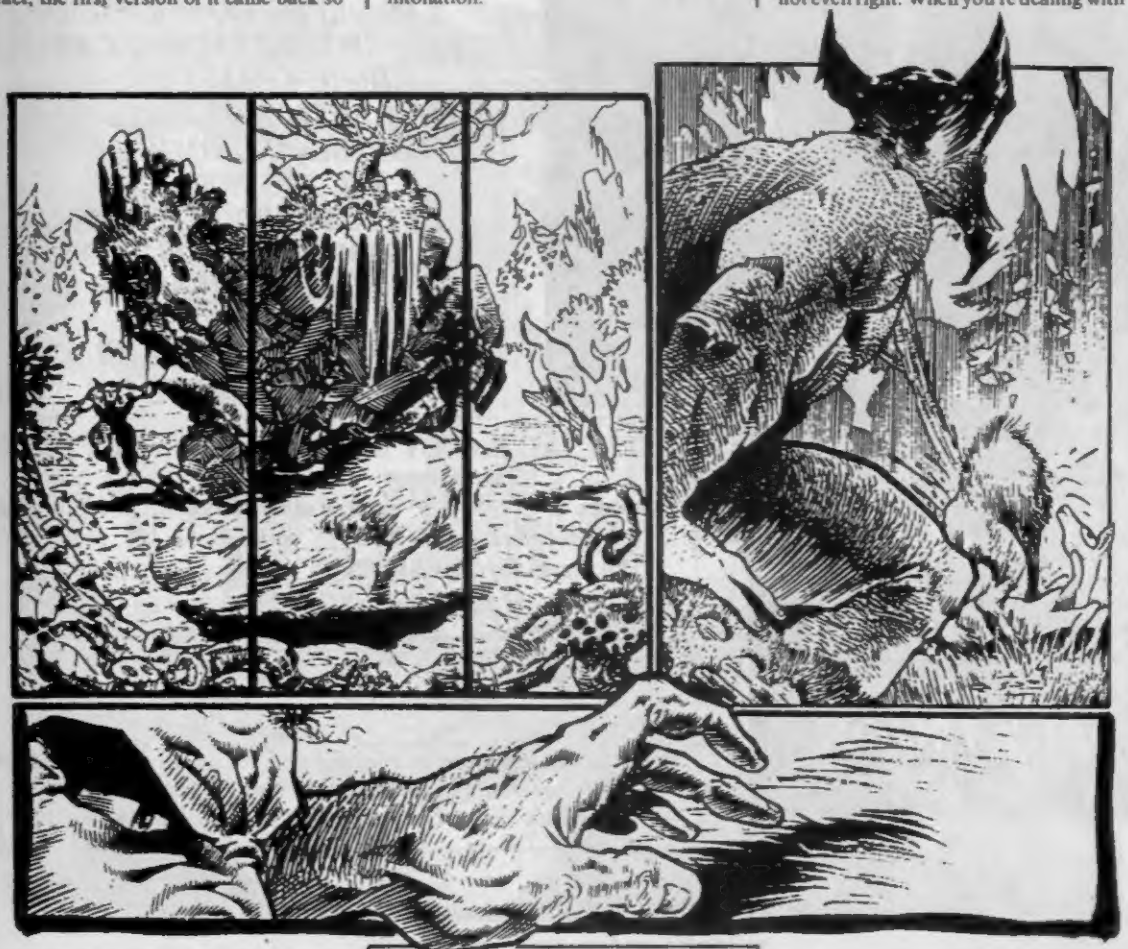
There is enough standard Wolverine action in there to keep the kiddies happy, and the climactic battle between Wolverine and the villain — whose name is Cyber — should be memorable enough. There are some sequences in there that people will be talking about for a long, long time. My feeling was if I didn't really have Wolverine cut loose in the final sequences, people would remember it as "This is the story Wolverine was real wussy in." So I had to make sure that, in the final sequences in the last two chapters, Wolverine was definitely *un*-wussy. The final battle is definitely not for the faint of heart — as people are accustomed to saying. As a matter of fact, the first version of it came back so graphic, I had to get in touch with the artist and say, "Sam, we have to tone this down just a tad or it's not getting through the Comics Code."

PAT: *On Wolverine in general, not just this particular story: When I interviewed Chris Claremont, about a year or so ago, he told me that* you *had once said — either directly to him or in an interview, I don't know which — that when you write Wolverine's dialogue you hear it in the same voice that Chris writes it in, because that's the only way you can think of Wolverine talking. Chris said that, oddly enough, when he reads your stuff — while it's good, he enjoys it — it doesn't sound* at all *like the Wolverine he writes.*

PETER: Of course not. That's always going to happen; that happens with any writer. The reason for that is that, when a writer is writing a character — particularly one that is so intensely personal as Wolverine is, I think, for Chris — when you write the character, you hear your own voice speaking the words. When I write the Hulk, I hear my voice except it's speaking with the Hulk's intonation.

When Chris is reading Wolverine as I've written him, he doesn't hear that voice because he didn't write those words. He tries to put his own voice to it and it doesn't sound right because the words didn't come from him. Therefore, the character doesn't sound correct. That's commonplace. It's exactly the way I react when I see the Hulk written by someone else. My feeling is that the surface may be there, but the nuances aren't there.

When I write Wolverine, I tend to view him a bit more primally than Chris does. When I do Wolverine, I stick to Chris's established format of captions for running narrative, for thought process, and to try to use a bit more staccato sentences, that sort of thing. However, when I do Wolverine, I treat him as much more of a primal force, whereas Chris tends to treat him as the noble samurai. I don't know from samurai. I think that other people tend to treat Wolverine as **Clint Eastwood** with claws, which I think is completely wrong. My feeling is to deal with the repressed rage — actually that's not even right. When you're dealing with



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"I see Wolverine as Tarzan of the Apes: a primal character."

Wolverine, you're almost treating him like Tarzan. Tarzan is a jungle animal, but he's got this veneer of civilization that he puts on — he becomes John Clayton, Lord Greystoke, and he seems very polished and very civil. But if you cross him, he'll rip out your throat with his teeth and not be sorry for a second, because you tried to screw with him and that's what happens to people who do that. I see Wolverine very much as Tarzan of the Apes: a very primal character and very tactile. Whenever I write Wolverine, I try to stress what he's smelling, what he's hearing, what he's feeling — because I think that's how he would be perceiving the world. He would be aware of his own blood pumping, of heart beats.

Chris, when he does Wolverine, tends to stress how he views his opponent in terms of nobility — and I tend not to.

When you're a writer, you're almost an actor. You assume a character and you do your own interpretation: You have **Mel Gibson's** version of Hamlet as opposed to **Laurence Olivier's** version. Both are equally valid . . . but they're not on at the same time. Because you have different writers handling the same characters with different viewpoints, you have different takes. When Chris says that I stick to Wolverine as *he* wrote it, that *is* what I said. What I meant is that I was staying with his delivery and the way he talks, but the motivation behind what Wolverine thinks and says differs a bit from the way Chris does it.

PAT: *What do you think of the current hints — or more than hints — that Wolverine is considerably older than we had been led to believe?*

"I like the aspects of the mystery man in Wolverine."

PETER: There have been more than hints . . . didn't they show him in World War II? Fighting side by side with Captain America?

Chris has been hinting around at that for years: that Logan has been around for ages and ages and ages. He said he wanted to do a story with Cap running into Wolverine and saying, "Sgt. Logan?" recognizing him from World War II.

I think that it makes eminent sense. If his mutant power is a healing ability, then one of the things it might be healing is cellular deterioration, which leads to aging. Therefore, it makes perfect sense that Wolverine should be fairly old — at least older than he appears. How old that is, I haven't a clue. I definitely think that if it is ever established, Chris should be the one to do it. I don't think he has any plans to — I'm just trying to second-guess him.

I hope he doesn't. I kind of like the aspects of the mystery man in Wolverine. I thought one of the nicest bits they ever did was early on — Wolverine popped his claws out of his hand for the first time out of costume. Banshee says, "I didn't know the claws were part of *you*." And Logan answers, "It's none of your business." In a subsequent issue, Wolverine speaks Japanese for the first time, and the X-Men say, "I didn't know you could speak Japanese," and again he replies, "It's none of your business."

These things give you tremendous flexibility as a writer. You can pull things out of your hat and when his companions comment on some seemingly new ability, he can just say, "I didn't bring it up because it's none of your business." I don't think Wolverine should be too spelled out because that would take away the element of what he might pull out of his hat next, that he's never spoken about because "It's none of our business."

I don't want to know too much of Wolverine's business. He should keep it to himself so he can continue to surprise us and continue to make life very convenient for writers. *(Laughter.)*

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— *Jim Lee*

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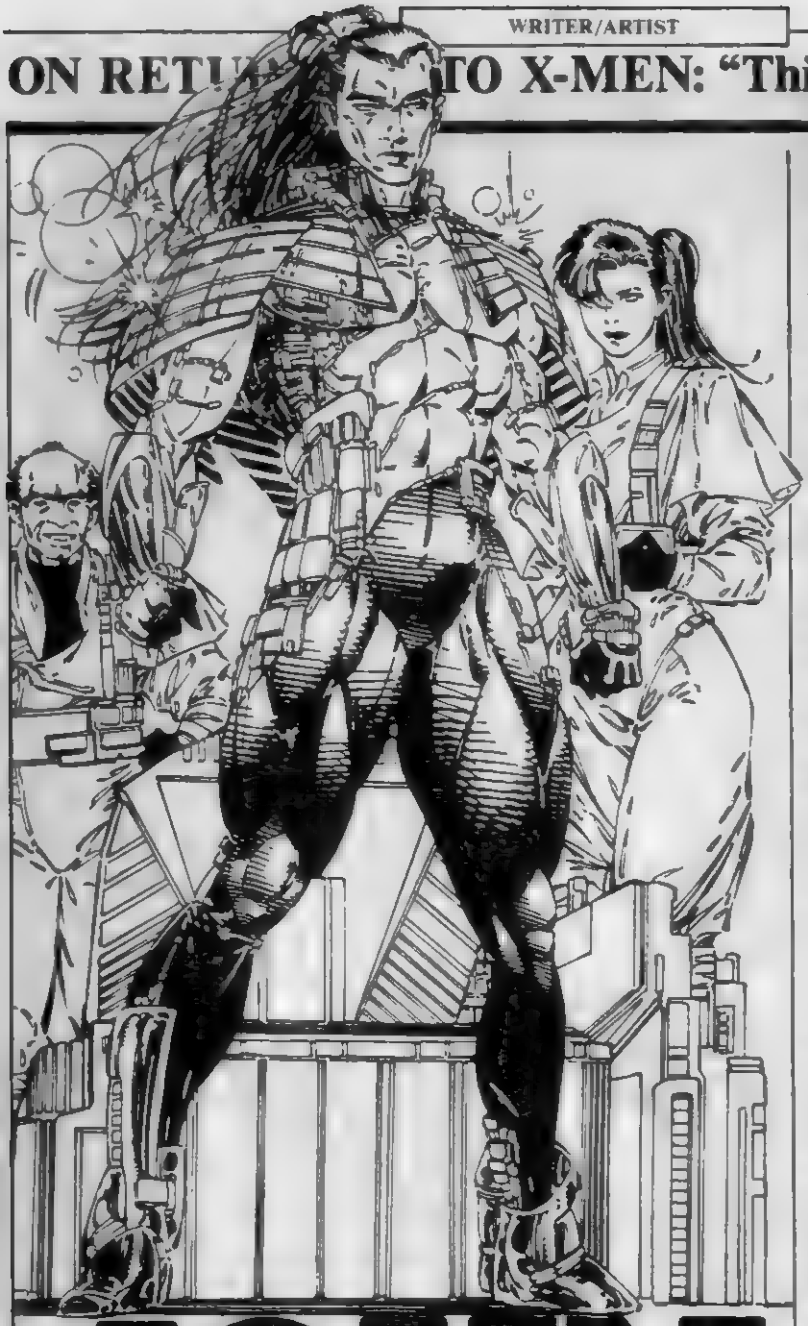

JOHN BYRNE

The comics industry got something of a shock a few months ago when it was announced that Chris Claremont, writer of THE UNCANNY X-MEN for more than 15 years, would no longer script that title or its top-selling new sister series, X-MEN. Speculation raged on who would replace him. It was answered very quickly — and as you no doubt know by now, the new scripter (working from artist Jim Lee's plots) is a name not unfamiliar to X-fans. John Byrne . . .

PATRICK DANIEL O'NEILL: *I guess everybody's first question upon hearing that John Byrne will be writing the X-MEN is — how does it feel to return to this set of characters after something like a decade?*

JOHN BYRNE: Eleven years. It feels a lot like coming home, which is very strange — not at all the reaction I would have expected. It took about a week for it to *start* feeling like that, actually. My first reaction was more . . . prosaic; more along the lines of "Oh, another job, another assignment." Then, slowly, over the space of a week, I began to think, "This is a big deal. This is a big deal for the fan community; this is a big deal for the comics industry," and, eventually, "This is a big deal for *me!*"

It *is* a big deal for me. It's interesting to sit down and look at these guys and see how far they've come and how much they've changed since the point I left having anything to do with them. And, of course, to measure how fast it will be and how long it will be before I can get them *back* to where they were when I left them! That may take a while

PAT: *Give me John Byrne's take on who these people are — as much as you can at this point*

JOHN: If I remember correctly . . . Gee, I don't even remember which book has which team now —

PAT: *That's OK; just name the character and we'll go from there*

JOHN: All right. *Cyclops:* Who is Mr. X-Men to me, always will be. He was my favorite character when I was 14 or 15 years old, reading the book; he was my favorite character when I was drawing

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the fan community, for the comics industry and for me."

"..UNTIL I KNOW ALL THAT IS TO BE KNOWN!"
WELL, LADY?
THIS HAS ALL BEEN MOST... *INVIGORATING*. HAS IT NOT?
INDEED IT HAS, GAMESMASTER.
INDEED IT HAS.
AND ONE CANNOT HELP BUT WONDER HOW MUCH *MORE SO* IT WILL BECOME...
...WHEN MY UNWITTING *UPSTARTS* LEARN THE *TRUE NATURE* OF OUR LITTLE GAME.
AND THE ACTUAL *PRIZE* FOR WHICH THEY ALL STRIVE SO *MIGHTILY!*

These two pages: Art from John's third UNCANNY X-MEN job, issue #283.

the book — yes, boys and girls, *not* Wolverine, but Cyclops. He is the lynchpin around which the whole concept rotates

Then there's *Jean Grey*, who doesn't seem to be calling herself Marvel Girl these days.

PAT: *Are you going to come up with a code name for that character?*

JOHN: That might be a good idea. Marvel Girl is, perhaps, no longer appropriate. Marvel *Woman* is just goofy. *(Laughter.)* Marvel Woman sounds like the kind of name a bad sitcom would use for a superhero. The name Marvel Girl never told us what she did . . . so there's no real justification for clinging to it, anyway.

So, yes, one of the things we'll have to do is figure out whether or not Jean gets a code name out of all this.

Jean is, of course, again, one of the founding members, one of the core group. She has been through a lot of crap over the years — a lot of which I was personally involved with, so I can freely and happily call it crap because I was

"I think I know who Wolverine is, since I take the

there at the time. The Phoenix stuff and all that, which I now look back on and think of as "Oh God — why did we do that?" Obviously, we'll be doing as little of that as possible during my tenure on X-MEN.

The Beast is another member, another founding father. He's blue and furry again. He talks like himself now, not like whatever that was that **Steve Englehart** turned him into. So he feels more like he's one of the old guys. He was always a fun character; I always liked the idea of the "bouncing, bombastic Beast," as we used to call him.

Iceman: Another founding father, and a character who, even as a kid, I never really got a fix on. I'm not really sure what will happen with him.

Once again, I should point out that **Jim Lee** and **Whilce Portacio** have already plotted several months' worth of arcs for both books, so I don't really have to worry about where the characters are going.

PAT: *On the other hand, even doing just the scripting, don't you feel you have to know who the characters are in order for them to "sound" right?*

JOHN: Certainly — and I'm going to make my insidious presence felt quite quickly, steering things into storylines that I want to do. I've already talked to Jim and Whilce and they're both very agreeable to the things I would like to see happen on the books.

Speech idioms are not really that tough. Most people in comic books talk in a kind of short-hand anyway. Banshee has always been obviously Irish because he says "Boyo" and things like that *(Laughter.)* The only character I'm anticipating having any kind of problem with in that sense is *Gambit*, who is supposed to be a Cajun. That's an accent I am utterly unfamiliar with. Looking at the book, it appears he says "Cher" every once in a while — or "Cherie." I think I'd like to figure out something more than that before I advance that particular character.

PAT: *Cajun is one of those dialects that's very hard to write down because so much of it relies on accent and lilt.*

JOHN: Rhythm. Yes. Transliterated, it reads like "dese and dose"; it could be a Brooklyn accent. "Dat dere, over dere, dat kind'a ting dere."

PAT: *It's difficult to figure out how to transliterate something like "Ah*

ICEMAN! THESE BEINGS WHO FIRST CAME THROUGH THE PORTAL ARE TERRIFIED OF THE NEWCOMERS—
—YET THERE ARE ONLY THREE OF THEM!
WHO ARE THESE MEN WHO COMMAND SUCH TERROR?
BEATS ME, RUSKIE!
DOESN'T SEEM TO BE ANYONE HERE INTERESTED IN MAKING FORMAL INTRODUCTIONS, EITHER!

Splash page from UNCANNY X-MEN #283, "Bishop's Crossing." Next page: John's own notes say it all, "looking for my NAMOR . . . ."

credit and/or blame for a lot of what he became."

guar-AHN-tee!"

JOHN: So, in that sense, Gambit's the only one who scares me.

Rogue: I think I have a pretty good fix on her. She's having a pretty good time with it, near as I can tell. That's pretty much the way I'll be playing her. Though it seems like she may have lost her powers — I'm not sure; I haven't had to write her yet. I've been asking the questions as the characters come up in the books. I call **Bob Harras** or I call **Jim Lee** and say, "All right, where are we now with this guy?"

Archangel: He's the first one I'm going to be campaigning for major changes in. Sorry, Walt and Weezie. I want him back as the Angel, as fast as possible. I've already told Bob I don't really like the furry Beast — but he does — so I told him I'd trade. I'll let him keep the furry Beast if they'll let me turn Angel back into his real self.

One of the reasons I want to do that, of course, is that I *know* Angel and I'm not really sure who Archangel is. Call it lazy if you want, but I'd rather have the characters in that state where I recognize them.

Storm: She's the leader of one of the teams. I don't really know where Storm stands right now. I know she's a lot harder and a lot colder than she was when I was doing the book. I'm going to have to do some reading — some supplemental reading, as it were — to determine just how much harder and colder she is. I gave her a particularly tough line in the first issue I scripted and **Bob Harras** suggested it was *too* tough, so we softened it substantially.

PAT: *Let me think who you haven't mentioned — Psylocke:*

JOHN: *Psylocke:* From what I can tell she's a pretty straight-forward tough female character with a heart of gold. I may be totally wrong on that. By the time I come to write her, I may find she's very different from the fix I have.

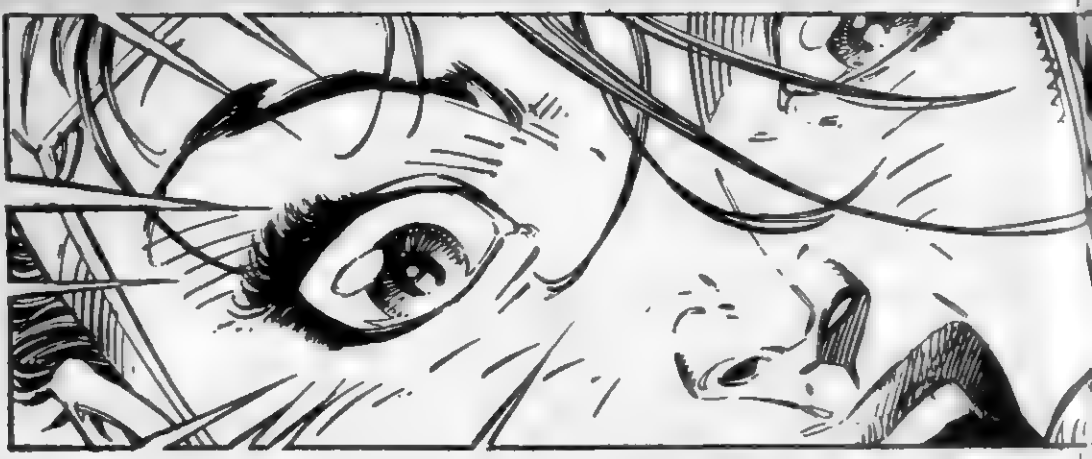
She has a wonderfully visual power: I love the psychic dagger she goes around sticking into people's heads. I can see where that would be fun to play with.

PAT: *And you haven't mentioned Wolverine!*

JOHN: *Wolverine,* of course! He's in the same group with the Beast, which strikes me as redundant somehow.

I think I know who Wolverine is, since I take the credit and/or blame for a lot of what Wolverine became. He was pretty much a cipher when I came on the book. As I run excitedly reminding everyone, Chris wanted to write him out of the

"When I was a kid I always hated Professor X."



book when I first came on . . . and I remember saying, "I'm not going to let you write the only Canadian out of the book!" I was very patriotic in those days I got over that when I moved down here.

I know Wolverine is a little more . . . noble, shall we say? He worries about it a little more than he used to in my day, when he was simply a homicidal maniac. I would like to steer him, if I can, a little more to that concept — but since he has his own book, and his own series in MARVEL COMICS PRESENTS, and is in 27 other projects, he's the one I actually have the least handle on.

In fact, I just scripted — I'm not going to draw this; I'm not insane — a two-page WHERE'S WALDO? parody for WHAT TH', called "Where's Wolverine?" We're hoping to get **Sergio Aragones** to draw this: It's a two-page spread of just about every character in the Marvel Universe fighting each other. There's a little box in the corner that says, "Actually, Wolverine isn't here. He's busy appearing in 27 other titles this month."

PAT: *Colossus?*

JOHN: *Colossus:* Peter seems to have changed very little since the days when I was doing the book. He used to be a tough guy with the soul of a poet, and now he seems to be manifesting his poet's soul by drawing pictures. From what I've seen when he's not running around being possessed by the Shadow King, he seems unchanged.

So, for the most part, except for newer ones like Rogue and Gambit, and the ones who have gone through major transformations, like Storm and Archangel, I don't anticipate a great deal of trouble hooking into them, right off the top.

PAT: *What about Professor X?*

JOHN: *Professor X:* when I was a kid I always hated Professor X. I also always hated Reed Richards. I hated the smart ones who were in charge. And that's pretty much the way I'm going to be dealing with Professor X — the smart one who's in charge. He's the boss, the head of the team; he's the one who sits back home and says "Go out and get in trouble . . . and I'll watch."

My take on him is that he is somewhat aloof, somewhat distant. Every three or four issues he gets one panel where he gets to say, "Oh, my poor X-Men — I worry about you all the time. By the way, go out and get killed." *(Laughter.)*

I'm being kind of glib here.

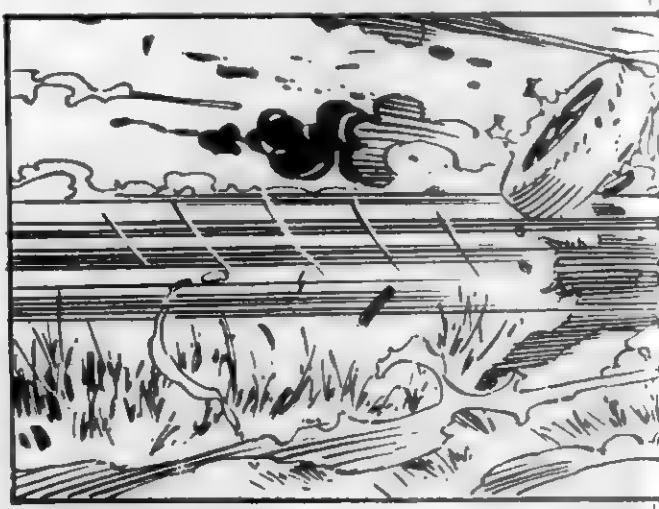
PAT: *I commented to somebody that I thought the problem with a mentor figure who is a telepath is that he starts to be like the coach with a radio connection to the quarterback's helmet.*

JOHN: Very much so. When Chris and I were doing the book, Chris wanted to get him out of the wheelchair and walking around and involved in the stories — which he did when I left. I argued against that because I felt that a mobile Professor X immediately makes the rest of the X-Men redundant.

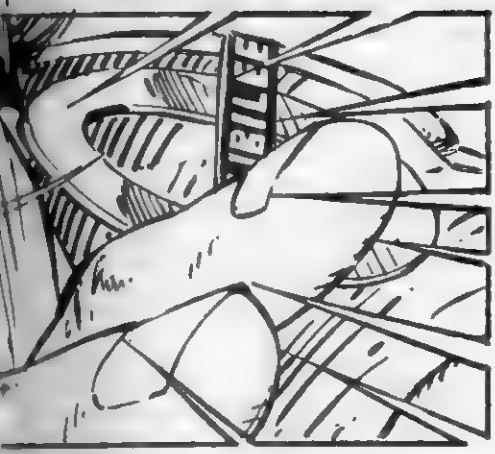
This guy is virtually unbeatable, as he demonstrated in the first half-dozen issues of the first series, when it was Professor X who came in at the end and actually beat both the Vanisher and the Blob, by walking in and saying, essentially, "OK — you're not bad guys anymore." ZAP! Or "You forget ever having fought us!" ZAP!

And I said, "God — if he could just walk in and do this, he'd be impossible. The rest of the X-Men would be reduced to sitting on the sidelines, eating popcorn and watching Professor X trash the bad guys."

PAT: *I also note that between the two teams — counting that Jean apparently has her telepathy back to some extent — the X-Men have three telepaths. And if you think having Wolverine and the Beast on the same team is redundant —*



"I'm pushing for a housecleaning — mutant massacre."



JOHN: Yeah, well . . . personally, I'm not that thrilled with the break-up of the whole team, as they divided them between the two books. If *I* had been in charge at the time, I would have been much more inclined to have the old guys in UNCANNY and the new guys in X-MEN . . . and not try to have this weird sort of intermingling.

PAT: *Maybe you can convince them, over the course of time, to do it your way?*

JOHN: I've already talked to Jim and Whilce about that.

My fiendish scheme is just to have the two teams guest-star back and forth between the two books to the point where we just forget that they're guest-starring and just leave them there. Of course, the other plan would be to just play the book as a bi-weekly and just pull whichever characters I need for a particular story.

"Why do we have two books? Just so we can have more mutants for the money?"

PAT: *Without revealing any great secrets, can you give me a rundown of the direction we'll see in future stories?*

JOHN: They have some kind of major arc running through both books as I come aboard, called "Mutant Genesis," which leads to the creation of X-MEN #1. I come on with UNCANNY #281, so I get sort of dropped in the middle of that. I'm really not even sure what that whole storyline is about . . . except that I know it involves the Hellfire Club and a team of young types — sort of junior Hellfire Club — called the Upstarts, who are running around knocking off Hellfire members. That's their initiation into the group — to kill one of the older guys to prove they are worthy of being in the Upstarts.

One of the Upstarts has a particularly interesting ability: He can pull objects out of time and he has pulled himself a whole squadron of future Sentinels. So he has this bunch of super-tough Sentinels running around, trashing mutants left, right and center. And non-mutants — they go after Pierce and his Reavers down in Australia.

That's what's cooking for the first while. In the midst of this, they want to introduce a new character who will become an X-Man. The first major story arc that I, myself, am pushing for is a major house cleaning. "Let's do the mutant massacre — but this time let's really massacre mutants." Just knock off about 85 percent of the mutants in the world, because there are far too many of them. Let's try to get back to square one: You have good mutants and bad mutants, and every once in a while a new mutant shows up and we have to race to get to the new mutant before the bad guys get there.

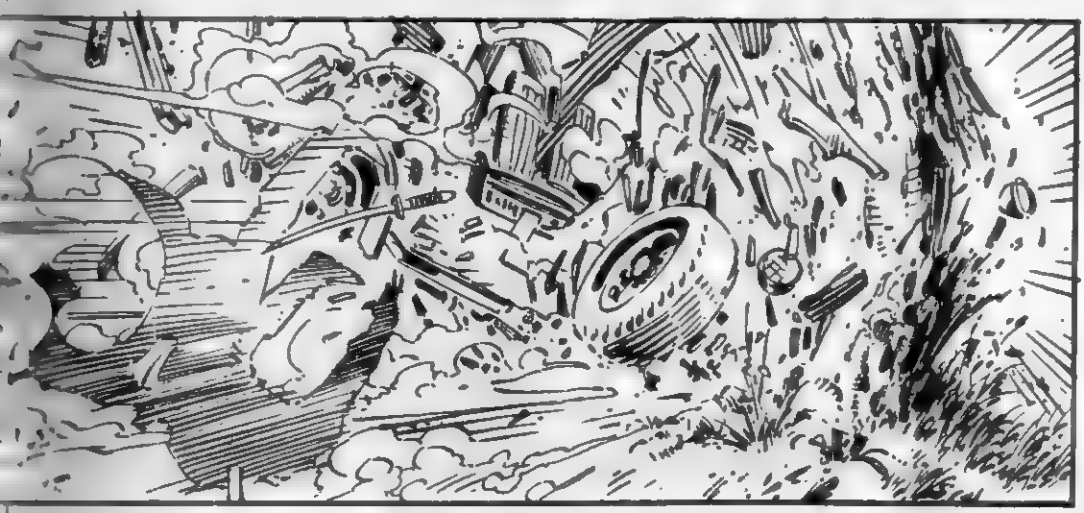
My take on Magneto is that he's a horrible, rotten bad guy — no matter what Chris says. He's in the other camp in all this.

PAT: *There are a number of other characters who have been with the X-Men, but — in the split between the two books — are fading into woodwork: Banshee, Forge, Jubilee. Do you have any plans for them? Have you talked with Jim and Whilce? Will we at least see them?*

JOHN: No real plans at the moment.

I have absolutely no real fix on Jubilee — other than the fact that she looks like she was drawn by **Al Capp** — if **Al Capp** drew Robin as a girl, basically. I have no real sense of who or what she is.

As far as Banshee and Forge: Maybe I'm being an old-fashioned kind of guy, but I like Banshee the way we left him when Chris and I were doing the book — off on Muir Island making nice-nice with



"I like the Banshee the way Chris and I left him"

Moira. But now Muir Island has been blown up, too. That was one of the first things *I* suggested: "Let's blow up Muir Island!" "OK — we're already doing that!" So I don't really know what Banshee's situation will be.

I haven't got a clue who Forge is

PAT: *I always liked Forge's power. I like the mutants who have powers that aren't terribly flashy but, if you stop and think about it, are awfully useful. I always thought Forge had an extraordinarily useful ability.*

JOHN: What is it? I haven't been able to figure out what he does.

PAT: *He is an instinctive inventor. Tell him you need something to do "x" and he'll build it — from what he's got on hand. Sort of a super MacGyver.*

JOHN: Or Lex Luthor in the old days. "I'll make a time machine out of an aspirin and an old radio."

PAT: *Something like that, yeah.*

JOHN: That sounds like one of those "how does this function as a mutant power" things Chris used to come up with. I don't know — sounds like he might be useful. This will all go into my supplemental reading.

PAT: *As you get more and more involved in the two X-Men books, to the point where you're co-plotting, how will it affect your other assignments?*

JOHN: I don't, at this point, anticipate it affecting my other assignments at all

I'm already phasing off IRON MAN, which was planned all along. I've got about a story and a half left to do on IRON MAN, somewhere around #278 or #279 I will have told all the Iron Man stories I came on board to tell in the first place. Plus the two elements that enticed me onto the book in the first place - **Howard Mackie** as editor and **John Romita, Jr.** as artist — are no longer part of the package. While I'm perfectly happy with the people who are replacing them, the incentive to stay beyond my announced tenure is much diminished. And the coming of extra work, like the X-Men, diminishes it even further.

As far as NAMOR is concerned, I've already planned that #25 is the last one I will pencil. I intend to remain as plotter and scripter. At this stage, **Rick Leonardi** will be the penciller. I'm glad I said

"The X-Men are going to pay my mortgage."

Leonardi, because I usually say **Marc Silvestri** — but it *is* **Leonardi**. There is a little bit less work I'll be doing and that basically adds up to the equivalent of the amount of the work I'll be doing on the two X-books.

I've been telling people that the best thing about doing the X-books is the ton of cash that automatically comes with it. *(Laughter.)* That subsidizes the lesser projects. It subsidizes SHE-HULK for me. I can now do SHE-HULK and not have to worry about whether SHE-HULK will pay my mortgage — which isn't very likely — because the X-Men are going to pay my mortgage.

It's very nice to find myself re-involved with a book that I discover, with every passing day, I have so much emotional involvement still there. To find all that and that it's going to put a ton of cash in my pocket and allow me to continue with *other* books I've become emotionally involved with . . . what more could anyone ask?

PAT: *A couple of years back, when I interviewed you as you were starting on NAMOR, you were really enthusiastic about the project . . .*

JOHN: I still am

PAT: *It recently went from newsstand and direct to direct sales only. I assume that's a consequence of its sales not meeting expectations?*

JOHN: Its sales are what I consider pretty bad — it struggles to hit 100,000. Back when I was doing X-MEN the first time around, 100,000 was nice and comfortable and everybody was thrilled if they did 100,000. In fact, X-MEN was doing 145,000 when I left it, which was considered pretty strong.

These days, 100,000 means you go direct-only. It isn't financially viable to do a newsstand book that isn't selling 100,000.

Which is sad. It doesn't really surprise me. I knew going into it that NAMOR is a book that *nobody's* ever been able to sell. Not since the Golden Age, when it didn't sell all that well, either. So, it doesn't surprise me . . . but here's another example of where the X-Men are going to allow me to stay on the book

PAT: *What do you think is the problem with Namor as a character?*

"I'm doing a history of the Green Lantern Corps."

JOHN: I don't know. Once upon a time I would have said, "All this underwater stuff is just boring . . ." We didn't *do* the underwater stuff and the sales still plummeted.

PAT: *Is it the lack of a flashy costume?*

JOHN: Could be. I've been giving serious thought to the idea of putting him back in the shark-skin thing.

PAT: *On the one hand, then, you're disappointed because you thought you could do something with it; on the other hand, it's sort of what you expected.*

JOHN: Everybody else's reaction was "Hey, **John Byrne's** going to do it; it'll sell millions.

My reaction was, "I dunno. We'll see." Unfortunately, my reaction was nearer the mark. The good thing is, I get to continue with it; if the X-Men thing hadn't come along, I might have had to give up the book altogether and go in search of a more profitable venture, since I do have this mortgage.

I'm doing SHE-HULK. I can't do two direct-only books, unless it's something like my Dark Horse project, which I own

PAT: *I assume you've finished OMAC?*

JOHN: I've almost finished OMAC.

PAT: *I take it the delay in that was simply to resolicit because they changed the package?*

JOHN: Exactly. They changed the price . . . not the package. It was solicited as a black-and-white book at the color price And some of us said, "No — what if we *don't* charge the kids for color they're not getting?"

Unfortunately, that meant that it had to be resolicited and delayed. Which means we're missing what **Jonathan Peterson** refers to as our "window of opportunity" — when we would have gotten out *before* all the new X-books. Now, we're delaying it until *after* all the new X-books.

PAT: *That makes sense*

JOHN: Yeah — the last thing I need is to be out there with X-FARCE and both X-books . . .

PAT: *You just said something I can't not follow up on. You just referred to one of the sister mutant books as "X-Farce". . .*

JOHN: Well, we do that. That's reflexive. We call all the books by silly names; it doesn't mean anything.

PAT: *OK — I couldn't let it slide by, though, John.*

JOHN: I've gotta watch that. I do it in interviews and some of the silly names we use are almost pornographic — so we have to be careful of what we say because it might end up in print. *(Laughter.)*

Two from John's sketch book — something John has very little time for anymore . . . sketching, that is.

PAT: *Are you doing anything else for DC — or are your Marvel projects now going to pretty much take all your time?*

JOHN: I have a Green Lantern thing I'm working on.

PAT: *I read about that — working off a bible by Larry Niven?*

JOHN: Larry's plot, yes. I'm scripting and drawing it; it's basically a history of the Green Lantern Corps, done sideways, that takes all the foolishness that's slowly been stuck into the concept over the years and reworks it and recalibrates it.

It's an interesting project. It starts from the easiest take in the world — "Everything is a lie" — and then it comes up with this wonderful reason why everything is a lie. It's beautifully logical; only **Larry Niven** could be so smart as to come up with this perfect reason why every-

"I'll be more than a footnote in the history of comics."

thing we know about the Green Lantern Corps and the Guardians is a lie.

That's kind of exciting.

PAT: *And you're working on — is it NEXT MEN?*

JOHN: NEXT MEN

PAT: *For Dark Horse.*

JOHN: I anticipated that being a slightly confusing title when I came up with it. Now I'm envisioning myself at conventions and having to ask everybody to repeat what they say when they ask me a question: "what are you doing next on X-MEN?"

"Excuse me, NEXT MEN?"

"X-MEN."

I never thought *I* would be the one confused by it.

PAT: *Give me a little background on that one.*

JOHN: The way it happened is the simplest and most prosaic of all reasons. Last year I had my 40th birthday, just past. I had my 41st birthday, and I've been very aware since my 40th birthday that I'm now the same age that **Stan Lee** was when he created THE FANTASTIC FOUR with **Jack Kirby.** Jack was 45 and Stan was 41. So I'm in a window now between those ages in which I figure I have to create THE FANTASTIC FOUR, if I'm going to be anything more than a footnote in the history of the comic-book industry.

And that's basically what THE NEXT MEN is — my attempt to create THE FANTASTIC FOUR. Stan sat down and said, "Here's all the stuff as it's been for years — I'm gonna turn it sideways."

I'm now trying to do the same thing, to reinvent the wheel-as it were, and say, "Here's my take on everything we've ever seen of the basic superhero genre." It's a tremendously appealing thing for me, because I've been experiencing a growing frustration in the last four or five years — it's probably four or five years that I've been moaning and groaning to people about this — that there are now, because of the structure of the Marvel and DC Universes, so many stories we simply cannot do. We cannot do the first alien contact story, for example, as a real simple, basic comic-book story. It's not only been done — it's been done 27 times. You can't do the first time-travel story; you can't do magic other than how magic has been established in those universes.

So the idea of having a virgin universe in which none of this stuff has ever been done and in which these five guys are the *first* beings with super powers ever to come along — I'm not going to do a **Roy Thomas** here and start installing a whole bunch of Golden-Age characters. There are no Golden-Age characters; these guys are the first, so I can play with all the conventions of comics and just reinvent the wheel.

I'm thinking of reinventing the wheel to the point of doing a GASOLINE ALLEY on this and having it happen in real time — which could be scary as hell.

PAT: *They tried that, didn't they, with the New Universe?*

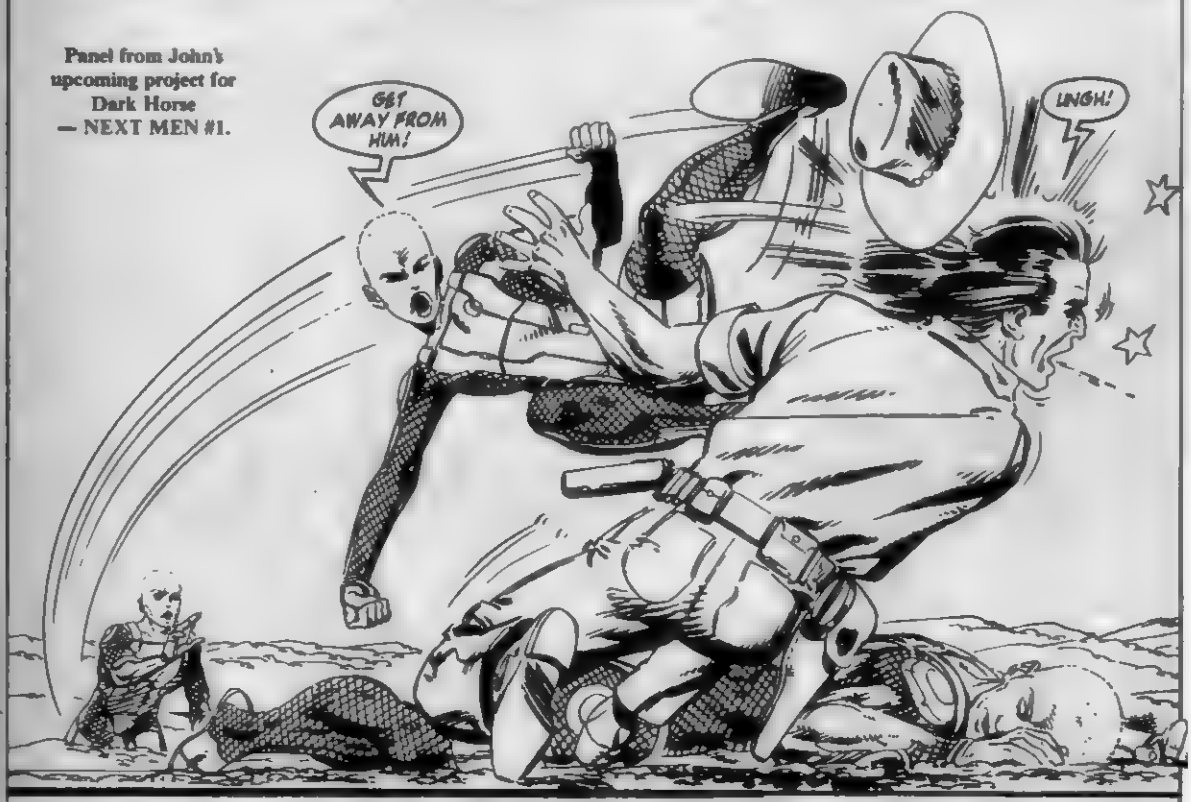
JOHN: But the New Universe didn't last long enough for it to be even noticeable. Perhaps this won't, *either!* There's always the chance I won't have to worry about it. "Gosh — ten years from now when these guys are pushing their 30s, what's that gonna do to the book?" Well, ten years from now the book may have been gone for eight years. It's going to be an interesting concept, if in fact I don't chicken out at the last minute and say, "Oh no, these guys have gotta be immortal, like everybody else."

PAT: *So what are they like?*

JOHN: What are they like? They're like mutants, only they're not.

It's five characters — I took as my starting point that each would have a single super-ability and each of the super-abilities would be based on things that people *can* do. We don't have anybody with wings, or anybody who turns into fire. We have a guy who's really strong, a guy who's really fast, a girl who's really

Panel from John's upcoming project for Dark Horse — NEXT MEN #1.



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"In the '40s, they didn't do the origin until the 10th year."

athletic, a guy with really great eyes who can see the whole electromagnetic spectrum, and a gal who's indestructible — tougher than dirt.

That's where I start, with these five characters who — because of the nature of the first story — have no awareness of the real world and are suddenly thrust into the real world. So they're dealing with the real world while the real world is busy dealing with them. And it's got all these secret government projects

I had to start somewhere. You know, there are only two origins in the whole world, so I picked the "secret government project" origin.

PAT: *How many origins did you say there were?*

JOHN: I said two. I break it down as technological or non-technological, Superman or Batman — you're either blasted away from a doomed planet or your parents are killed by bad guys. That's pretty much all you've got.

PAT: *Accident or design?*

JOHN: Exactly

That was the one thing I worried about the least on this project. The origin is just something to get past. It's what happens after the origin that counts. In the Golden Age, they didn't even *do* the origin until the 10th year. "You want to know where this guy came from? His

Cover #0 (that's how J.B. wanted it) to John's NEXT MEN.

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"I get depressed by the state of the industry today."

mother was shot by a bad guy. There you go." That was as much as they were worried about the origin. I almost got back to that stage — the origin is the least important thing about these guys.

PAT: *Let me get very general here. What is your position, your take, on the state of the comic-book industry today?*

JOHN: I get depressed by the state of the industry today. I really don't like the direction we're going . . . I'm going to alienate everybody who buys my books now.

The direction we're going — in terms of the power the fans have over what is produced — bothers me. It's an indirect power because they can't actually walk into the office and say, "Do this." But

Pencil panels from NAMOR #24, by Jae Lee, story by John Byrne.

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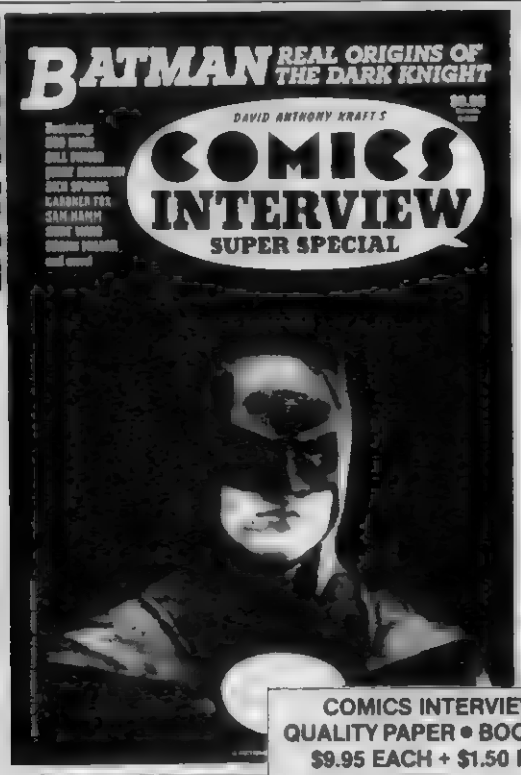

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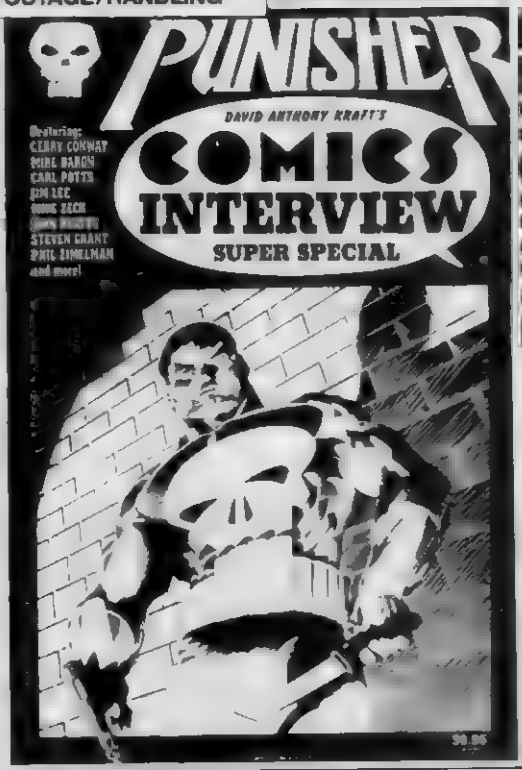

"Comics Interview Super Specials, Punisher, Batman, X-Men and — the piece de resistance — Masters of Marvel. I'd rate all of these as don't-miss items, particularly the last named. Grade: A."
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"The approach these days seems not at all story-oriented."

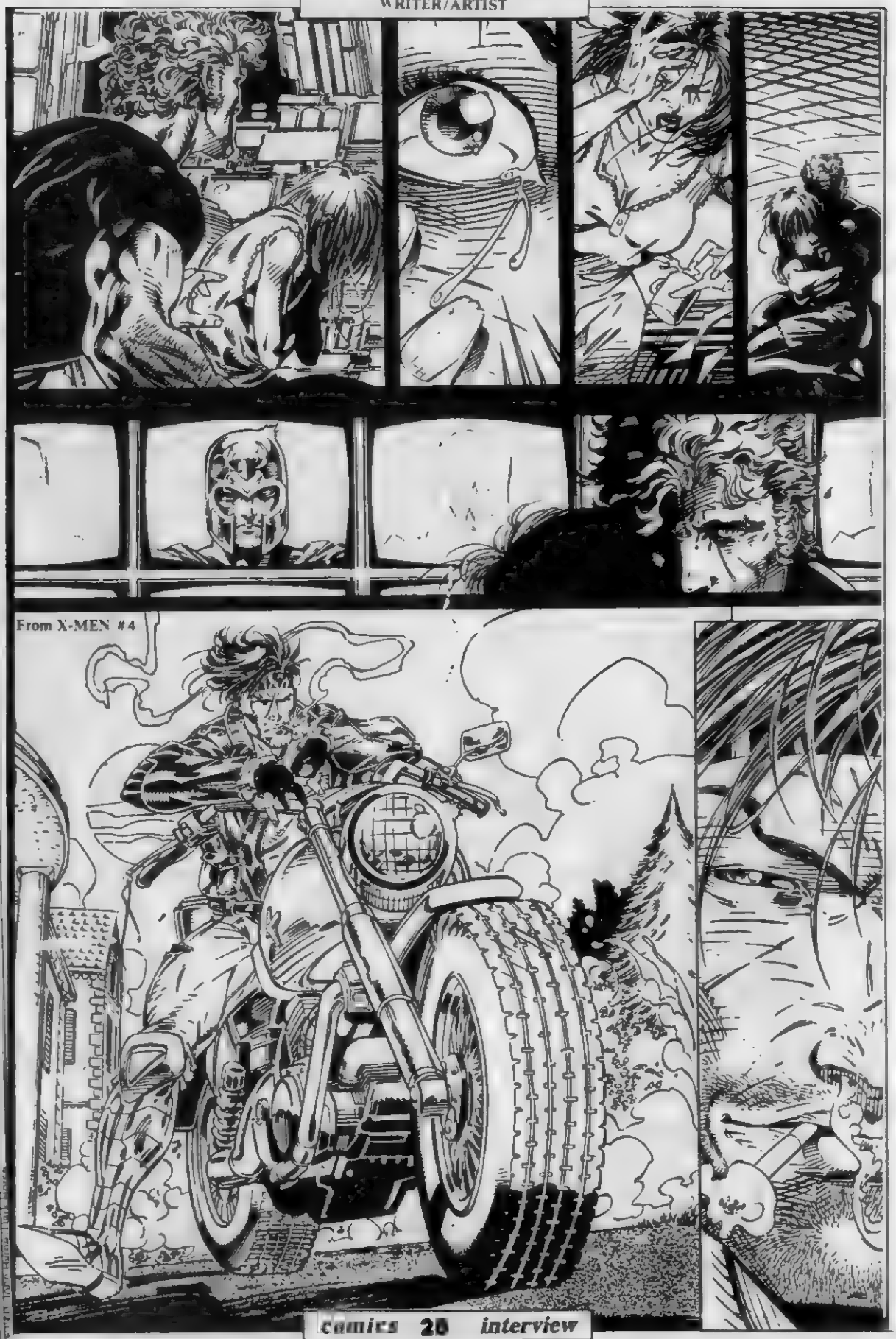
marketing is constantly aware of what sold and what didn't and why. The whole approach these days seems to be not at all story-oriented; it's all event-oriented. "Which event can we cook up this year that will sell a ton of books?" That's what SPIDER-MAN #1 and X-FORCE #1 and X-MEN #1 and all these plastic-wrapped, multiple-cover hoo-has are about: They're events.

Consider SPIDER-MAN #1 as an example. I like Todd's stuff, so this is not intended to be a diminishing of **Todd McFarlane** or his work, but they sold 3.5 million copies of that thing, sight unseen. It wasn't even previewed in MARVEL AGE, as far as I know, before they'd sold 3.5 million copies. Which means the fans were buying it without knowing what they were going to get: Todd could have been experimenting with his new stick-figure style for all they knew. *(Laughter.)*

But they bought 3.5 million copies of it. Then, of course, Marvel realized it was a money machine. We used to have a joke in the office — there's an old BC strip in which one of the characters discovers that clams have legs, and he goes around saying, "Clams have legs!" And one of the clams, standing to the side, says, "Now we have to kill him."

We in the industry turned that into "Fans got bucks!" So anytime somebody sold something we'd say, "Wow! Fans got bucks!" Unfortunately, it seems like that's the whole approach these days — the realization that there are people out there who are willing to spend vast amounts of money on these packages

VERY WELL, ICEMAN.
BUT I WILL NOT LET THIS MATTER END HERE! BISHOP SPOKE WITH *REVERENCE* OF THE X-MEN.
HE WORE OUR SYMBOL AS IF IT WAS HIS OWN!
IF THERE IS AN ANSWER TO BE FOUND...
...WE MUST FIND IT!
I FEAR... OUR VERY *FUTURE* MAY *DEPEND* UPON THE KNOWLEDGE!



From X-MEN #4

"On SHE-HULK I trampled the cliche to death."

Marvel Comics
Book Sensational She-Hulk # 4
BOB- NOTE THAT HER HAIR IS NOW REAL CURLY (FROM THE E
SO FAR THIS FALLS JUST A TAD SHORT OF MY BEST CASE SCENARIO.
LIKE FOR EXCUSE ME, MUCH AS I'D, AND SUE ELLEN FALL SHORT OF OZZIE AND HARRIET!
HEEL TOUCHES PANEL BORDER
BUT, UNLESS THE HIGH!
ONE OF THE ADVANTAGES TO BEING SCORCH IS THAT BLOOD IS YOUR SOURCE BACK IT UP!
HEY! HI, ROCKETS!

SHE-HULK pencils complete with various directions, all by John.

without any consideration of the basic validity of the package or the spending of the money. Somehow, we are able to persuade fans to part with $7 million worth of their hard-earned money. That depresses me.

PAT: *Do you think the industry is stagnating a little by not exploring outside the superhero genre?*

JOHN: The genre is fine. The problem is that nobody wants to do anything exploratory *with* the genre. People who dismiss the superhero genre are like people who dismiss westerns, as far as I'm concerned. "The western is dead." No — it just takes somebody to come along and do something different with the western. People certainly woke up when **Alan Moore** did WATCHMEN, because he did something different — or something that was *perceived* as different, which is perhaps a better evaluation.

I'd like to see anything and everything being done in comics. But my own personal first love is the superhero genre and I want to explore the superhero genre in different ways. That's partly what NEXT MEN is all about . coming at this same thing from a different direction.

My approach in general at Marvel has been to say, "Well, here are all the cliches — what if rather than trying to explode the cliches, I approach the cliche from a different direction? What if I run right up to the cliche and then turn 90 degrees? Except on SHE-HULK, where I run right up to the cliche and trample it to death.

PAT: *Sometimes on SHE-HULK, I feel like you're running up to the cliche, shaking its hand, and introducing it to the audience.*

JOHN: Many times. One of these days, I'll have her turn to the camera and say, "That was a cliche, in case you didn't catch it." It's delightful to have a character who knows exactly where she is — and why. And can react to things in the comic — without making fun of it, of course. Making fun of the conventions in comics is shooting fish in a barrel. It's too easy. The trick for me with SHE-HULK is to try and have a good time with it without literally poking fun at the genre itself.

That's a waste of time

"I enjoyed THE X-MEN, but I was never a die-hard fan."

TED BOONTHANAKIT

As yet unsheduled, but lurking somewhere in the future to spring upon readers in the pages of MARVEL COMICS PRESENTS, is a multi-part Wolverine adventure drawn in whole or in part by none other than Ted B. Avid enthusiasts of independent comics may remember Ted's eyecatching art from MICRA, a few years ago, and wonder what he's been doing in the meanwhile. Read on, for the answer may amaze you (his work is often right before your very eyes!) — and one of these days his comics art will return on one of Marvel's major characters . . .

DAVID ANTHONY KRAFT: *Let's go back to your origins, which are shrouded in mystery on the dark continent — where were you when you read your first Marvel comic?*

TED BOONTHANAKIT: Nairobi, the capital of Kenya.

DAK: *How old were you?*

TED: Ten.

DAK: *What was your first Marvel comic?*

TED: It was THE AVENGERS.

DAK: *Did you read THE X-MEN back then?*

TED: I believe there were a few, but the books that were drawn by **John Buscema** were the ones that mainly caught my attention.

DAK: *Is that when you decided that you were going to draw comics?*

TED: Well, it sort of evolved later on, as I was becoming more and more interested in art. I would sort of fall back on these comics as a reference source, and I would try to emulate **John Buscema.** Then I realized that I actually enjoyed doing these characters, and I was hoping that one day I would draw a comic — never quite really knowing how it was going to come about.

DAK: *Then you moved to the States and I ended up publishing MICRA — which you pencilled and inked. Just as comics have footnotes, we can refer the readers here to the interview that we did way back in INTERVIEW #49 for the full story. Anyway, I remember when we were first discussing MICRA, you said that you'd be very happy if your work just got out there where people could see it, because you felt that your art would speak for itself and good things would result. And you are now working on a WOLVERINE story?*

TED: That's right!

DAK: *Were you familiar with him as a character?*

TED: As much as most readers, I'm sure. I enjoyed THE X-MEN, but I was never a die-hard fan. When Wolverine became a *major* popular character I sort of neglected to follow his, you know, climb to popularity. Before long I realized that he was *it*, he was the thing that's carrying Marvel more or less. But by then he was being drawn by some of the best-known artists in the field, so I never thought that I would have a go at him.

DAK: *It's a pretty interesting jump — from MICRA, to today's mainstream comic-book audience probably an obscure black-and-white comic from four or five years ago — to your next comics assignment, doing WOLVERINE for Marvel.*

"Mick Jagger . . . Very unassuming personality,

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wasn't as ugly as I thought he would be. *(Laughter.)*"

TED: I would say! *(Laughter.)* And, of course, my thanks to you, who got me in touch with **Dwight Zimmerman,** who was editing MICRA and will be writing the Wolverine story. Dwight and I have often talked about — well, he's always mentioned how he enjoyed my work and would like to see me on a more mainstream character, and I've often wondered how my style would work on the more mainstream books

DAK: *Are you making any changes in the way that you approach the storytelling?*

TED: I'm playing it by ear; I'm just sort of letting it *evolve.* I would hate to try to be something that I'm not, so I'm hoping that as I do it a hint of my style will come through and people will recognize it as something different — but enjoyable enough to follow

DAK: *Well, we've touched on the comic-book side of your art, but there's a whole other side of your art that, I'm tempted to say, is unseen by comic-book readers — except that's probably not the way to put it, since unbeknownst to them they probably* have *seen a lot of it! I'm thinking, of course, of the Kellogg's cereal boxes*

TED: And the numerous television commercials they see every day.

DAK: *Let's go over some of that. What are some of the things that people might be familiar with — but not realize are your work?*

TED: My biggest clients? Well, obviously, being from Atlanta, Coca-Cola would be one of them, would be in the forefront. *Enormous* suppliers as far as projects are concerned, I'm one of the thousands of artists who are doing advertising things for them. Some of the other notable TV commercials would be the U.S.M.C. spots, Orkin —

DAK: *Which Orkin commercials would they be?*

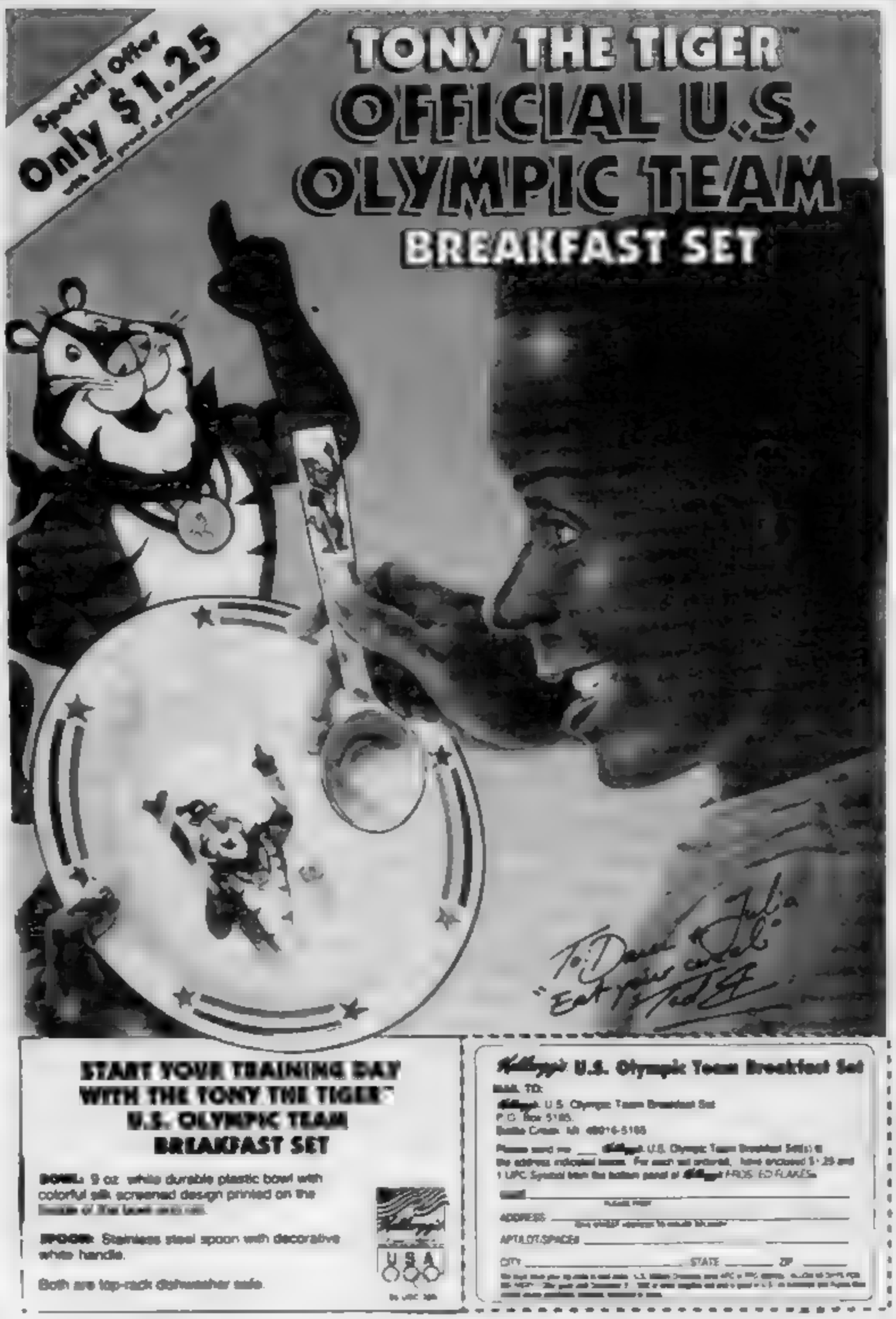
TED: The ones with the robot; he's called "the Terminator" but he's more like the Transformers, and he goes around hunting bugs. I've worked on a number of those.

DAK: *And what exactly are you doing on them?*

TED: Storyboarding.

DAK: *You work out the angles and tell the story — and they film from that?*

TED: Exactly, yeah. Sometimes the advertising agencies have already developed them precisely frame by frame, but there are times when I personally take things into my own hands and change things as I feel they should be — in order to catch the more dramatic angles or lighting or such.



DAK: *When they film or animate these things, do they follow your storyboards very closely?*

TED: Fairly closely. Sometimes they, too, embellish as they see fit, according to budget and time.

DAK: *Also, you have been doing some movie storyboarding recently, right?*

TED: Yes, three in the Atlanta area, major feature productions. The first was a small production that has already been released and gone from the theaters, by **Michael Schultz,** of **Carwash.** It was originally called THE TAPE OF DEXTER JACKSON but was released with the title changed to LIVING LARGE *(Laughter.)* For whatever reason. Soon after that came a bigger production, called FREEJACK, which hasn't hit the theaters yet.

DAK: *That's with good old Mick Lips, isn't it?*

TED: With **Mick Jagger,** yes. *(Laughter.)* And with **Anthony Hopkins,** who flew into Atlanta right after that movie with **Jodie Foster.**

DAK: *THE SILENCE OF THE LAMBS?*

TED: Yeah. As soon as he was done with that he flew to Atlanta and began shooting FREEJACK

DAK: *Did you get to meet Mick?*

TED: Not personally, but I went to watch some of the filming and saw him around. Very unassuming personality, wasn't *as* ugly as I thought he would be. *(Laughter.)*

DAK: *And who is the director on that one?*

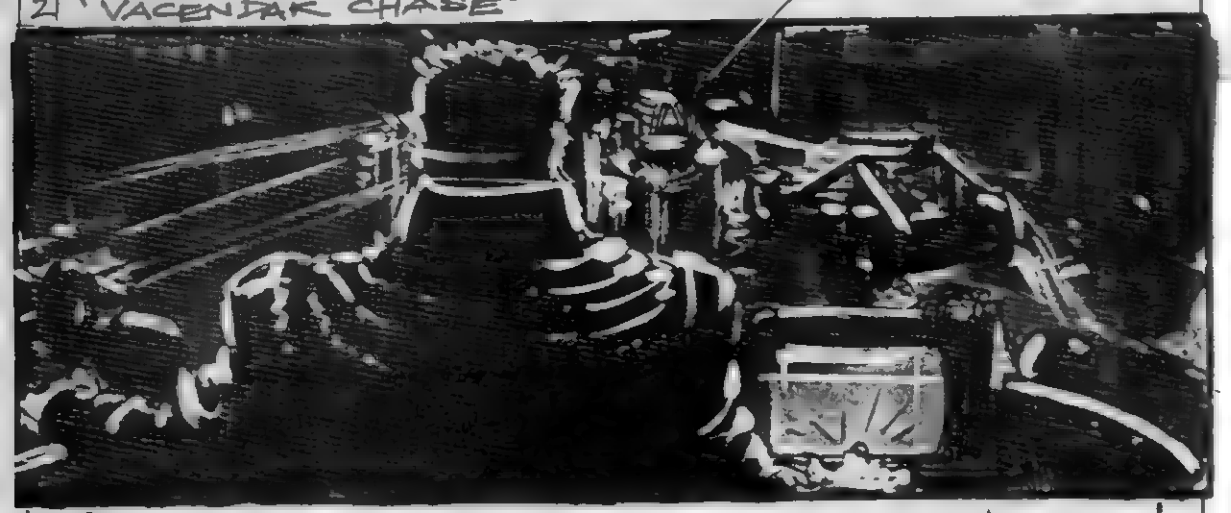
TED: Let me see . . . **Geoff Murphy,** of

1

FREEJACK C/U VACENDAK ATOP PERSONNEL CARRIER

2 'VACENDAK CHASE'

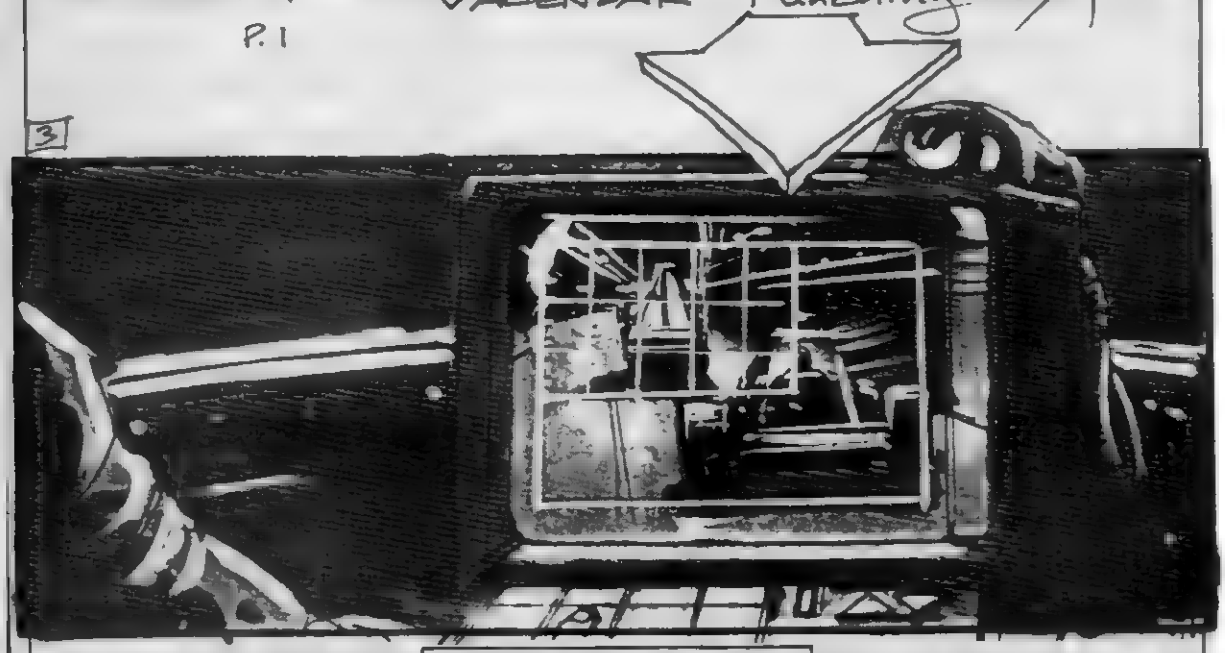
ALEX

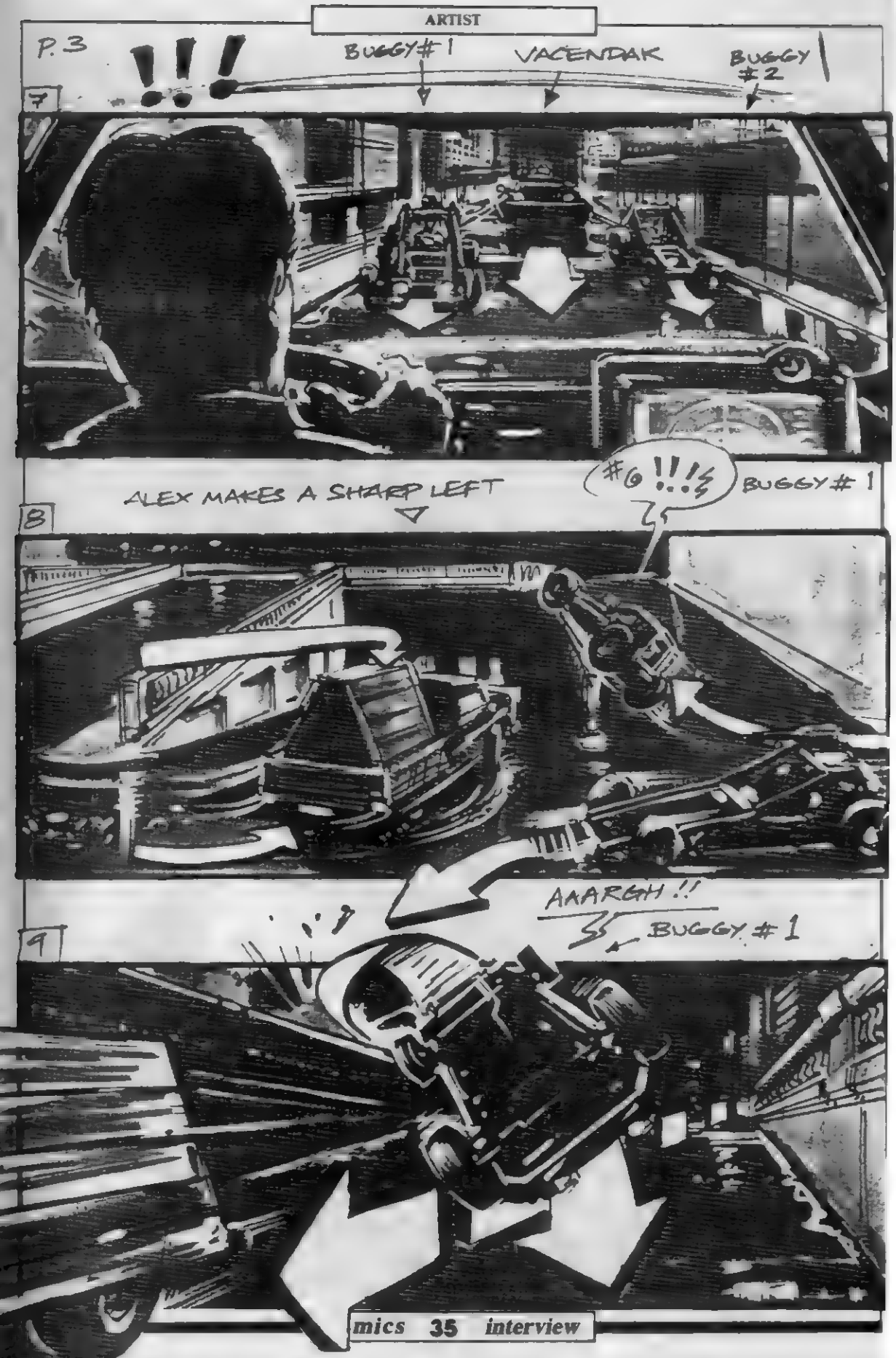


SCENE 119
P.1

VACENDAK Punching key pad.

3




ARTIST
P. 3
!!!
BUGGY#1
VACENDAK
BUGGY #2
7
ALEX MAKES A SHARP LEFT
#6 !!!
BUGGY#1
8
AAARGH !!
BUGGY#1
9

"In comics, you employ a lot of dynamic and over-

Young Guns II.

DAK: *I'm a little puzzled by why a major motion picture would book the space and pay all those people to come on location to a city such as Atlanta and, at that point, start to look around for somebody to do storyboarding. Seems more logical that they would come readily equipped with their own storyboards . . .*

TED: Simply put, we didn't have the restrictions of the union here in Atlanta as much as they do in New York City or in Hollywood

DAK: *What kind of restrictions?*

TED: Well, not so much restrictions as much as, you know, they're not confined by the different rules and regulations that come with working with union members.

DAK: *So, you'll work around the clock, that sort of thing?* (Laughter.)

TED: I'll work around the clock, yes And I'll work well. The union dictates how much you should get paid; I, in turn, feel that I can charge as much as I like, above and beyond whatever. I'm not governed by any union regulations.

DAK: *You can charge what the market will bear?*

TED: Yes. And I did precisely that — and they didn't even seem to blink.

DAK: *You said there were three movies?*

TED: Yes, the most recent one I did is called FRIEDGREENTOMATOES. An odd-sounding name but it's a very *charming* script directed by **Jon Avnet.** This is his first time directing; he's really a producer. But he's complained of having run into some extremely temperamental directors — so he said he was going to do it himself. We don't know how it's going to come out, but the script was *extremely* charming and if it's done well it should be quite a hit.

DAK: *Do you find any similarities in your approach to storyboarding and your approach to comics?*

TED: Not so much, except for the exaggerated expressions and dynamic movements you see in comics — beyond that, you have to take into consideration angles, lighting, and you have to remember that movie storyboards in general are very loose and are kept minimal. They don't require great detail because of the large number of frames that you have to do per movie. There's really no need to spend a lot of time on each one of them because there really *isn't* a lot of time

DAK: *And that's different when you're doing comics?*

TED: I would think that you spend a little bit more time, at least if you are a penciller, spend as much time as is *necessary* to get your style across, and to make it easier for the inker to take over from there.

DAK: *You said that you* don't *really see a lot of similarities in the storytelling approach —?*

TED: The similarity is there, but in comics you employ a lot of dynamic and over-exaggerated linework and movement, whereas in storyboarding for movies and commercials you don't need to do that as pronouncedly

DAK: *So, if you were storyboarding this very same Wolverine adventure as a movie you would probably approach it differently?*

TED: Slightly differently. Placement is more important in storyboarding; where would the camera be *precisely?* The cinematographer will have to follow your frames very precisely. But there's no need for linework, that's not of main importance. It's the *placement* that's more important.

DAK: *Do you live in fear of what will happen with an inker?*

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exaggerated linework and in storyboarding you don't."

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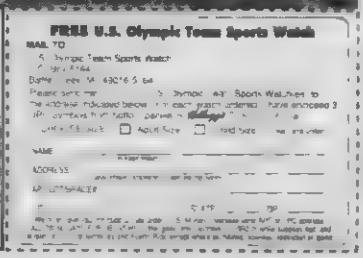
"Commercial artwork isn't too dissimilar to comics."



TED: I do, as a matter of fact. *(Laughter.)* Yes, I do. I would hope that I would get someone who is fairly good

DAK: *Compatible?*

TED: Compatible, yes.

DAK: *I know you inked MICRA yourself, and you do most of your commercial work with, what, markers?*

TED: Markers, yes.

DAK: *I guess it's not a routine occurrence for you to turn your pencils over to someone else for finishing — and not really know what they're going to come out like?*

TED: No. I've heard some horror stories; as a matter of fact, you have, too! *(Laughter.)* Where the finished comics were not quite what they were originally menat to be, supposed to be

DAK: *Well, I wanted to talk a little bit about the Kellogg's cereal boxes because, after all, you get to draw that cultural paragon, Tony the Tiger.*

TED: *(Laughter.)*

DAK: *What did you say the print run was on the two that I saw, 75 or 80 million?*

TED: I know for a fact that the one with the speed skater had a 72,000,000 print run.

DAK: *Wow! Now, if you could just work out a royalty!* (Laughter.)

TED: Yes, wouldn't that be nice

DAK: *That's on everybody's supermarket shelves?*

TED: Should be, right about now

DAK: *They don't let you sign that type of work, though, do they?*

TED: No, they don't. It's one of those things with big corporations.

DAK: *It's interesting to me that a lot of people have evolved out of comics towards commercial art — it has been said by John Buscema and a lot of others that some very talented artists had to get into commercial work because they couldn't really afford to stay in comics. Yet you're coming from the other side, from storyboarding movies and doing commercials and cereal boxes and things for Coca-Cola, to comics — you're trying to fit comics into your schedule*

TED: Well, I'm sure doing commercial artwork is not dissimilar to those who do comic books — where you do nothing but sit at your table and draw and draw and draw all day long. I work approximately 20 hours a day, for example, and it gets to the point where you would like to at least have a variety, you would like to try something new. And hopefuly fairly successful. Comics is something that I've always wanted to delve into, and at this point I shouldn't really predict the

"I don't understand people who cannot take directions."

success — I'm just *grateful* to be able to do it, especially to get to do a character like Wolverine. I just want to enjoy it.

DAK: *Is Marvel going to let you paint the covers?*

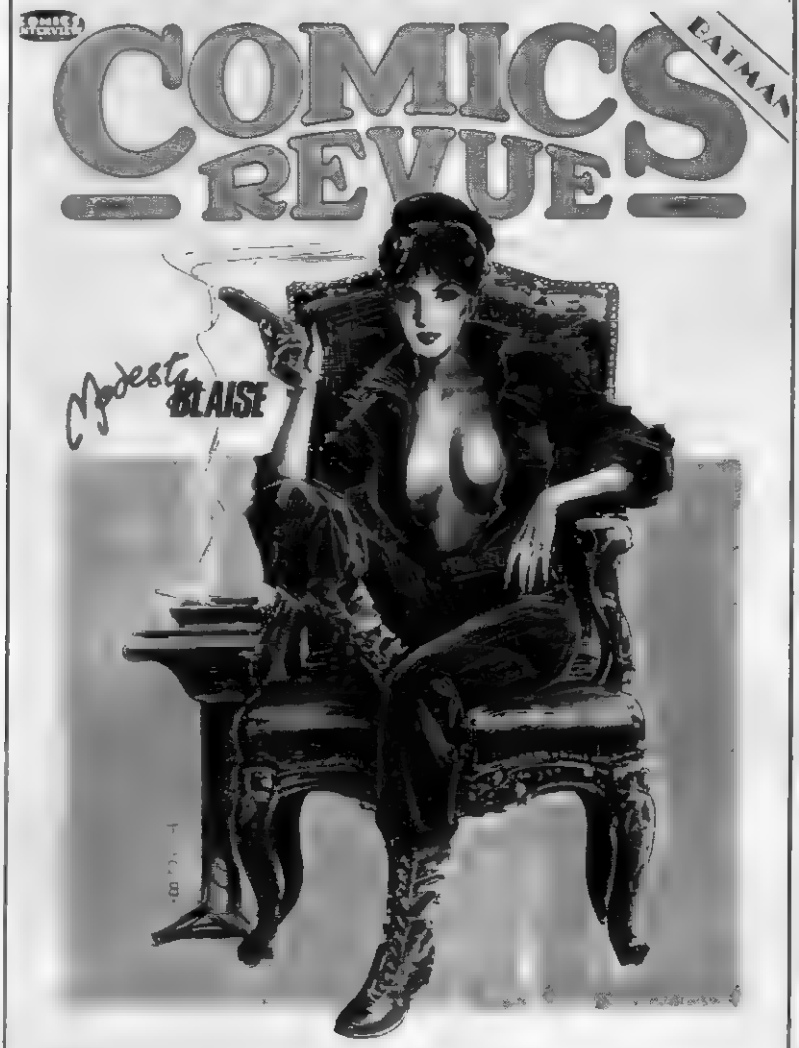
TED: I don't know, I've not mentioned it to Dwight. I would *love* to!

DAK: *Were you serious when you said that you work, on the average, 20 hours a day?*

TED: Yes

DAK: *There's no exaggeration in there?*

"There are so many hungry artists out there



TED: No exaggeration — no. That's it.

DAK: *How do you do this? Massive injections of speed?*

TED: Caffeine. *(Laughter.)* Good old caffeine, never fails.

DAK: *How long can you sustain that kind of a schedule?*

TED: Well, it's been an ongoing thing for about five years now.

DAK: *But you take plenty of vacations, right?*

TED: I do that, yes. I think — if I didn't — I would not be here speaking to you right now. *(Laughter.)* It's not like I'm complaining, because there are people out there who are crying because there's not enough work. And I'm not a workaholic, don't get me wrong; I work because there's work to be done, the work's there, and if I don't then I would probably end up just walking around the house and not doing much of anything else.

DAK: *A lot of the creative people doing comics have trouble taking direction, they don't like to be directed by an editor or an art director, and there's a lot of behind-the-scenes rivalry and friction. And yet you deal all the time with commercial accounts, where much is dictated as to how you're going to do things.*

TED: I've never been able to understand people who cannot take directions. All your life you must take direction, some way or another, and I don't have any problem with that — if I am paid in full what I charge the clients. It's *their* project. You don't have much of a right to decide, and if you don't like it, you keep it to yourself — or if you are really *adamant* against something, then you don't do it. It is their project, it's not yours, and you're being paid to do it. I do it because I *want* to do it.

DAK: *Do you have the same feeling about comic-book work?*

TED: I. . . it would be the same I would do the best that I could, and I hope that, eventually — if I keep up the good work — good things will come of it. But I don't think that I should be the one dictating *anything* at this point. Wolverine is not my character and Dwight is the one who is writing the story.

DAK: *Is the commercial money really so much more than comic-book money for the amount of time that you spend? Does that make it difficult to find time in your schedule to do the comics?*

TED: There's so much more money in the commercial business, and it's so much quicker. That makes it . . . I mean, if you want to have a lifestyle, and if you have already established a certain lifestyle, it's *very* difficult to suddenly walk away from that for any amount of time because you're not sure if you can come back and fall into the same groove. There are so many hungry artists out there who are just *dying* to jump into your place and take over, and the commercial market is one where there is no loyalty. They know you by your work — but they don't know you as *who* you are. We often deal through representatives or by phone or through the fax machine, and there's no human involvement there. So I've hung in here working 20 hours a day in order to keep up this relationship, so as not to create a gap — because the money's very good but at the same time it may not always be here.

DAK: *I wonder if you've considered easing the workload by having assistants?*

TED: Well, I've had one or two, on and off, depending on the workload. There's always the thought in the back of my mind that — one of these days — I'm going to have to go into it in a big way, not fall into a trap of working too hard for a limited amount of income. I can't keep up this sort of schedule forever, sooner or later my body's going to quit, so I really have been in a mild dilemma for the last few months. But I'm sure that'll work out. Comics is sort of a diversion for me right now.

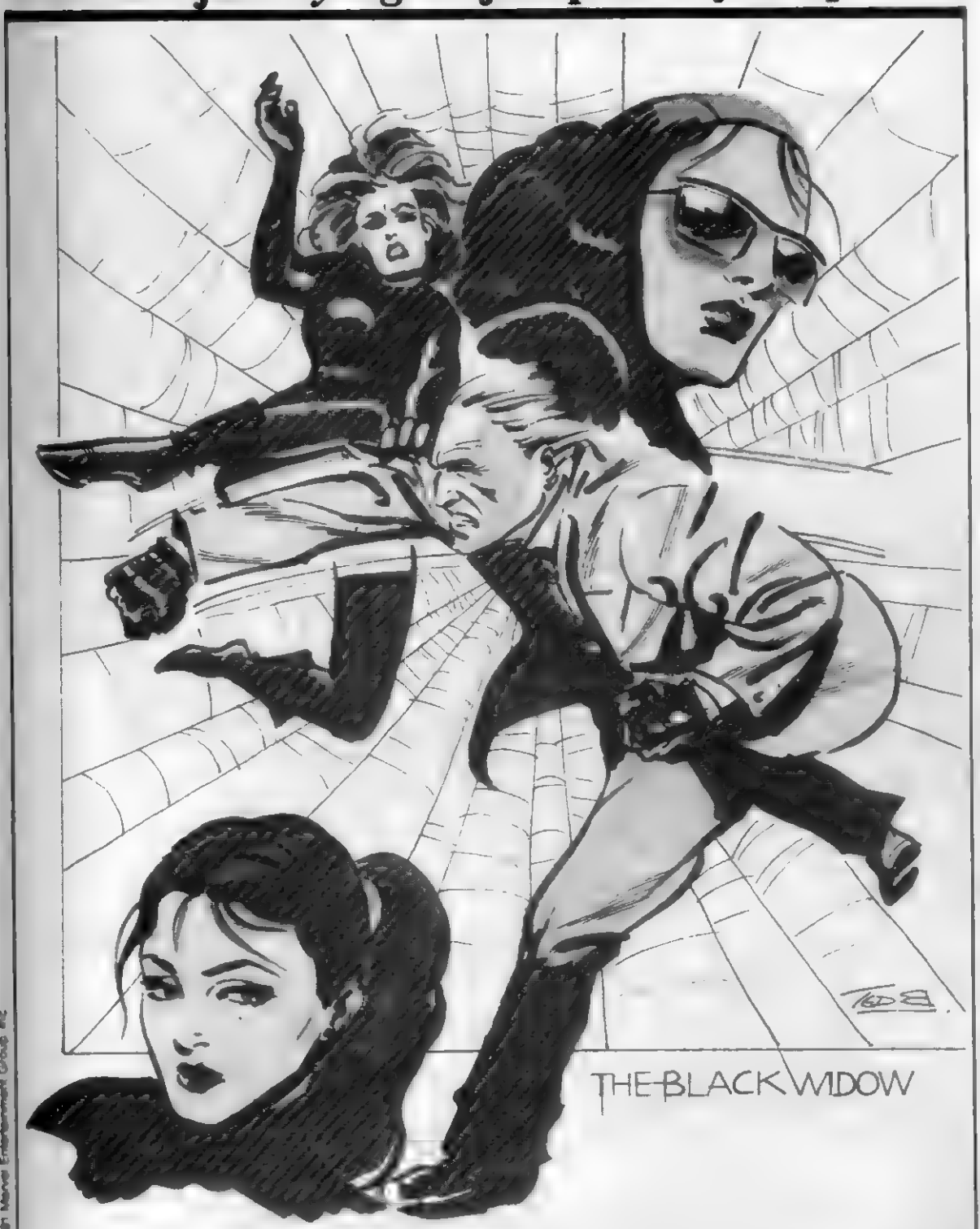
DAK: *Given all the differences in time and money, could you afford to devote more time to comics?*

TED: Well, I would hope that it could lead to something bigger, given enough time and exposure.

DAK: *You hope that you can command enough attention that you will make a name for yourself?*

TED: Yes.

who are just *dying* to jump into your place."



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DAK: *If you had your choice of any character at Marvel — which one would you pick?*

TED: I've always enjoyed the Black Widow

DAK: *That's an unusual choice!* (Laughter.)

TED: Those who are familiar with MICRA will know I enjoy drawing female characters, and I've always liked the Black Widow and I think she has such wonderful potential.

"Comics is a sort of diversion for me right now."

DAK: *Do you look at comics now? Do you get time in the other four hours that you have to sleep and have a life to keep up with comics?*

TED: Well, obviously not as much as I would like to! I've managed to look through some, the latest from **Jim Lee,** and one of my other favorites is — I don't know if I should say this, it's not even a Marvel book — CRYING FREEMAN.

DAK: *That's translated from Japanese?*

TED: Exactly, yes.

DAK: *Is it the art that interests you or the story?*

TED: It's both. You know, the way the Japanese do things is *quite* different from the American books, and I enjoy that very much, although there are some rather explicit situations that you don't get to see that much in American comics.

DAK: *Sexual or violent?*

TED: Sexually, certainly — actually, both. But the way they treat the sexual things seems to be more sort of . . . it comes very natural to them, and it seems to be an integral part of most of their stories. It *must* be there. And yet somehow we've managed to do without that in American comics. *(Laughter.)*

DAK: *Well, we don't have it in American private life, either.*

TED: Of course. *(Laughter.)*

DAK: *Are there any other comics that you look at from the different companies?*

TED: I'm a big MODESTY BLAISE person. Specifically as drawn by **Jim Holdaway,** because I grew up with his strip in Kenya. That would be one of the daily strips that I would get to read, MODESTY BLAISE and JAMES BOND

DAK: *Here in the States, the only place that you can get the new MODESTY BLAISE strip is in COMICS REVUE, which I publish. You did a cover painting of Modesty for one issue.*

TED: That's true.

DAK: *Well, is there anything that we haven't touched on about comics that you want to say?*

TED: Well, I think it's only prudent that I give my appreciation to **Lamar Waldron** for noticing me and giving me the chance with MICRA. That's where it all really started.

DAK: *And, in fact, there is a question that I'm sure there are readers wanting me to ask — whatever happened to MICRA? Are you going to finish it?*

TED: It will be finished eventually, yes. We've talked about it. How, when and where? The mystery will have to be continued. *(Laughter.)*

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A rare glimpse of the complete Stroman/ Milgrom artwork used for the upper left-hand (corner) cover section. Uncropped and at original size.

"The mutant books get the greatest attention from fans."

PETER DAVID

If I do any more interviews with Peter David, he and I will have to do a joint appearance to prove we are not the same person. In this, our third chat for COMICS INTERVIEW, Peter and I discuss his latest assignment, writing the all-new version of Marvel's X-FACTOR.

PATRICK DANIEL O'NEILL: *How do you view the opportunity of taking on one of the mutant books?*

PETER DAVID: I look forward to it basically for two reasons. Number one: people who enjoy my work — both of them — have said to me, on numerous occasions, "Gee, we think it would be really great if you did a mutant book," as if it's my choice.

Fans seem to have the impression that I can just go waltzing into an editor's office and say, "I'm of a mind to do a mutant book. Assign me one."

PAT: *On the other hand, there are people who can do that . . .*

PETER: . . . but I'm not one of them. Generally, you have to be able to draw.

So, it was a very pleasant surprise when **Bob Harras** approached me about taking on X-FACTOR. At last, those people who had been saying, "Why don't you take on a mutant book? We'd love to see what you would do with it," are finally getting what they would like

By the same token, purely on the basis of career advancement, the books that focus the mutant characters are the ones that get the greatest attention from the fan base. X-MEN, X-FACTOR, these are the ones that people don't miss, because they feel that's where the heart and soul, the real action of the Marvel Universe is. Whereas there are still plenty of people who don't know me from a hole in the wall because they don't read HULK, they will now gain some familiarity with my work through X-FACTOR. So, I look forward to the chance to expand my audience base as it were.

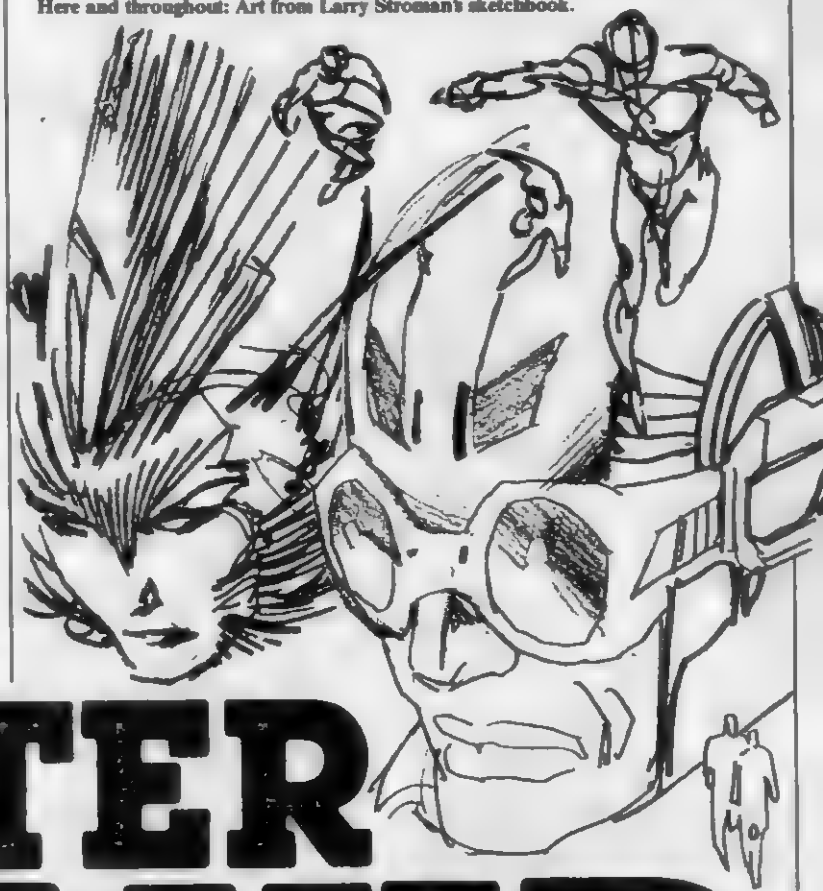
PAT: *The new X-Factor is who? And were they handed to you — or did you choose the line-up?*

PETER: These people were handed to me. It was not so much a matter of "OK — You're going to write X-FACTOR and here's who you're going to have, whether you like it or not," as it was "Would you be interested in writing X-FACTOR with these characters?" That's a bit of a difference. The way you put it, it sounds like "You wanna write X-FACTOR?" "Sure, great." "By the way, it's none of the characters you want."

The line-up is going to be Havok, Lorna Dane, Guido, the Multiple Man, Wolfsbane, and — as a surprise guest — Quicksilver, which I'm quite pleased about.

Originally, Legion was going to be in the group, and we had a slight problem. I was extremely uncomfortable with the thought of Legion in the group simply because Legion is a story in and of himself . . . and comfortably working him into a group in some way that wasn't utterly contrived was something I had a great deal of difficulty with. I don't mind building a story around him, but working him into a group — you're really asking for a bit much from the reader. Believing that a group of people will

Here and throughout: Art from Larry Stroman's sketchbook.



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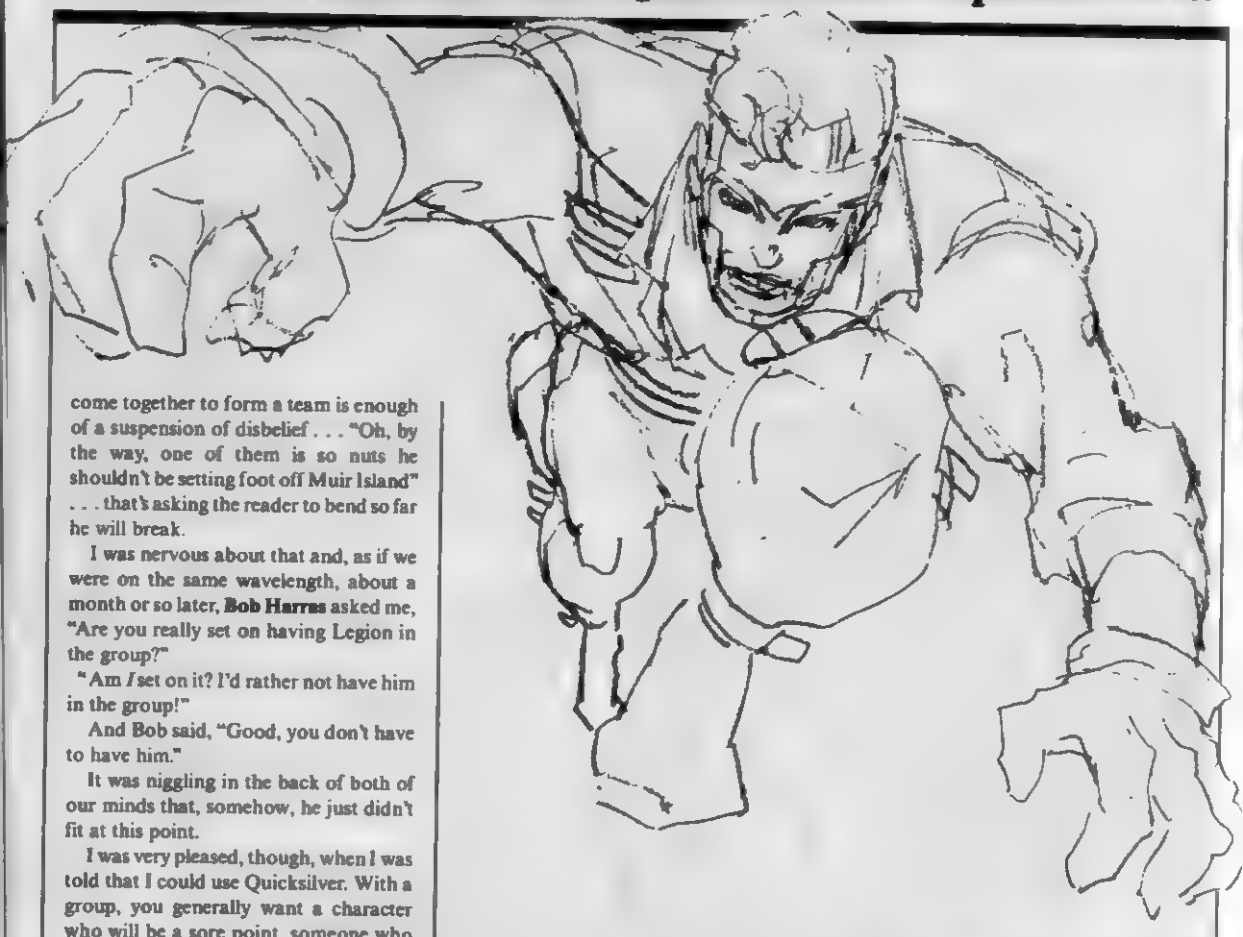
"X-Factor is a group with a point of view imposed on it."



come together to form a team is enough of a suspension of disbelief . . . "Oh, by the way, one of them is so nuts he shouldn't be setting foot off Muir Island" . . . that's asking the reader to bend so far he will break.

I was nervous about that and, as if we were on the same wavelength, about a month or so later, **Bob Harras** asked me, "Are you really set on having Legion in the group?"

"Am *I* set on it? I'd rather not have him in the group!"

And Bob said, "Good, you don't have to have him."

It was niggling in the back of both of our minds that, somehow, he just didn't fit at this point.

I was very pleased, though, when I was told that I could use Quicksilver. With a group, you generally want a character who will be a sore point, someone who can stir things up.

PAT: *The irritant, the pebble in the shoe . . .*

PETER: Exactly. I loved the idea of Quicksilver; of all the characters in either the Marvel or DC universe who are arrogant, I can think of exactly two who have a right to be — one is Namor, the other is Quicksilver. And perhaps Quicksilver has more reason to be than Namor.

PAT: *Why do you think Quicksilver has a right to be arrogant?*

PETER: Think about it this way: Have you ever gone into a post office, stood in line, and the postal clerk was incompetent? Or gone to McDonald's, and the people don't understand the words "Big Mac"? What is your general feeling in those situations? You generally feel impatient. You feel irritated. Have you ever stood in the post office behind a woman with 20 packages who wants to know every single way she can send them to Africa? It drives you nuts! You think to yourself, "Why do I have to put up with this? These people are so slow, they're costing me time, and it's so damned irritating. I wish I didn't have to put up with this." Now — imagine that the *entire world* was like that . . . except for you.

To Quicksilver, just having a conversation is irritating. My feeling is, if this guy can move really fast, then he can move really fast. I'm not dealing with superspeed on a physical level, which is what everyone always seems to focus on — what **Mark Gruenwald** did so well with D.P. 7 or what they're doing more now in FLASH. I'm dealing with accelerated speed from the mental aspect; to Quicksilver, as he said in an issue of AMAZING SPIDER-MAN many, many moons ago, the rest of the world is moving in slow motion. That must really, really get on your nerves.

Quicksilver lives in a world filled with people who don't know how to use cash machines, and want to know all the ways to send packages to Africa, and can never get your order right in a Burger King unless you repeat it several times. That would tend to make you feel very superior to everyone and very impatient with everyone. He has just as much right to feel that way as you and I do to feel irritated by people who don't know how to use a cash machine.

I find him a really intriguing character from that point of view. Of course, from the point of view of the rest of X-Factor, the reaction is, "Oh yeah, well fuck you!" *(Laughter.)* It's not like the rest of the team will say, "OK, I understand . . ." Quicksilver has such a singular point of view I love it.

PAT: *As you said, it's often difficult to come up with a reason for a group of heroes to come together: The Fantastic Four are a family; the Avengers are a social group cum police battalion; the X-Men are fighting for justice for mutants. Why is X-Factor together? What is their point of view?*

PETER: This is interesting: X-Factor is a group having a point of view imposed upon them. Which should create some friction. Essentially, they are a government group. They are a strike force, in the same way that Delta Force is. They're the government's answer to the X-Men. If there's a specific situation in which it's appropriate to use a government strike force, they send in X-Factor.

"The members of X-Factor have lives outside the group."

They are salaried; they don't all live in some great big headquarters, like the Avengers or the Fantastic Four. I always loved that: Have them all grouped together so a villain can come and nuke them! *(Laughter.)* I never did understand that!

The various members of X-Factor, just like the various members of the FBI or CIA have their own homes they go to at night; they have social lives outside of the group. To them, "it's not just an adventure — it's a job." *(Laughter.)* That's not a bad tag line, now that I think of it.

PAT: *They're sort of a replacement for Freedom Force?*

PETER: X-Factor will be Freedom Force — but with pleasant-smelling breath and good posture. *(Laughter.)*

PAT: *Who ropes them into this and how do they do it?*

PETER: It's a combination of Professor X, Cyclops and Val Cooper. Cooper is especially enthused about this because, as she says in the book, she's so tired of her FBI agent brother talking about the exciting things he's doing — like the weird murder of the girl wrapped in plastic. *(Laughter.)*

PAT: *In addition, she's now working with people who have a legitimate background as heroes — as opposed to most of Freedom Force.*

PETER: As opposed to the scuzzballs. It's Freedom Force — except you wouldn't be embarrassed to be seen in public with them. These are people you can have a press conference with and be reasonably sure they won't embarrass you.

PAT: *Will they have code names?*

PETER: Oh yeah. The one I had trouble with a code name for is Guido. I was trying to come up with a decent one and I think I finally hit on one. Strong Guy.

Havok will tell him he needs a code name, and Guido will see very little reason for that and have very little patience for it. "OK, you come up with something." Havok will say, "It's not my job. Just come up with something that reflects that you're the group strong guy."

And Guido answers, "OK, I'll call myself Strong Guy."

"No, you can't call yourself that," Havok argues. And Guido responds, "Why not? What could make it more clear than that?"

I try and bring a fresh perspective to mutants.

This is why they don't let *me* write all the mutant books. How would *I* have the X-Men pick their teams? It would be like gym — everybody would stand in a

"It's easy to find comics that bore you or don't surprise

group, there'd be two team captains, and they'd choose their teams. And there'd be one poor schmoe standing in back, saying, "I *know* I'm going to be last . . ." That would be me. If I were a mutant, I would be the last one picked.

PAT: *Who would that be?*

PETER: I figure it would be Jubilee . . . not that I dislike the character, but she has the weakest power and she would get on my nerves the fastest. "Geez, we've got Boom-Boom, what do we need her for?" Actually, it's a shame Doug Ramsey's dead, because he would be the obvious odd man out. He'd be the equipment manager.

PAT: *How is it going for you?*

PETER: Basically, I'm feeling my way. This is the first time in years where I've started on a book. I've been writing HULK for five years; even when I just started writing STAR TREK, that was a snap — I just had to step into characters I'd known for two decades. This is the first time in ages I'm starting fresh on a book, which is always a really scary experience.

When I come on a book, my attitude is not to come in with a bunch of large-scale plots; Kree-Skrull wars, time-travel, tying up outstanding plotlines that have been hanging around for 15 years. I feel there's nothing unique to the book if you come up with a generic plot and just plug in these characters.

I try to get a feeling for the characters and work from within, try to develop stories that would be the most interesting and involving for these characters. As a result, I have a storyline developing from Jamie Madrox having his bodies killed off; or dealing with things that affect Quicksilver's speed; and Wolfsbane's fascination and devotion to Havok and how that affects Havok's relationship with Lorna. That's where I find the meat of the story to start with.

PAT: *The other thing you're writing on a regular basis is HULK. In the past year, you have completed conceivably the most radical change in that character in his 30-year existence. There have been all kinds of variations on the Hulk.*

PETER: Most of the changes run in on the Hulk have been from external forces: "He's got a bullet in his head." "The Leader's subjected him to radiation and he can't change." And now he's this, now he's that, now he's some other thing. It was always an outside force acting on the Hulk. It made him the ping-pong ball of the Marvel Universe — "What shall we do to the Hulk *this* month?" What new thing can we inflict on this character and screw around with the basics of the concept?

I basically work from the other direction, inside-out. Doesn't necessarily make me any better, just different.

PAT: *You based part of your revamp on Bill Mantlo's suggestion, several years back, that Bruce Banner was an abused child. You worked from there, asking, "What happens to abused children?"*

PETER: **Bill Mantlo** did this wonderful story that set up Bruce as an abused child and implied that the potential for the Hulk was there all along and the gamma bomb just released it. I thought this was incredible (odder for a series of stories — and then Bill never did anything with it! I couldn't understand it — he went off in another direction. "No, no, wait — what about this story over here?" Bill seemed to regard that story as the climax and answer to the storyline he was doing about the three little "thingamabobbles" that were following the Hulk around and being his personal Greek Chorus. My feeling was, "Yes, but those three little guys weren't *interesting*." This is not the time to close off the story; this is the springboard for the story.

Child abuse is one of the most common root causes for multiple personality — and what is the Hulk if not a multiple personality? It's all there! Bill spelled it all out and then went off in another direction. And I said, "No, no. I want to go back in *this* direction!" Once I took over the book, that story was very much a guiding force for me in terms of the direction I went. It was always present in the writing, even when it wasn't a major plot element. It was a plot element finally around #376-377; that's when it really came to the fore — but it was always part of the Hulk's persona, once I started the book. If you go back and re-read the stuff, you will find that there are always little allusions and references to what happened to Bruce Banner as a child, references made both by Bruce and by the Hulk.

PAT: *Have the long-time Hulk fans objected to what you're doing?*

PETER: Of course — we've been getting letters like that since I started on the book. There's always going to be someone who says I'm ruining the Hulk. When I first came on the book and it became clear that I was *not* bringing back the dumb green Hulk, that I was sticking with the more intelligent, savvy grey Hulk — that garnered tons of mail that said I was screwing it up. Then, as time went by, and the grey Hulk settled in and I and the readers got more of a feel

you, but to find comics that royally piss you off is difficult."

for the character, people started saying, "Hey, I *like* the grey Hulk"; some of that, of course, was because the hard-core green Hulk fans left.

And, once everyone was happy with the grey Hulk, I brought back the green one. Now came the deluge of letters that said, "You're screwing it up! How dare you bring back the dumb green Hulk!" Then I had *both* of them running around . . . and now I had letters arguing for or against both of them. When I integrated them with Bruce, I got letters arguing for the return of one or the other version of the Hulk and a handful of letters that said, "Gee, I like what you're doing." Controversy is no stranger.

PAT: *Given that sales on HULK have steadily improved all the time you've been writing it, can we assume the letter writers are not necessarily representative of the readership as a whole?*

PETER: You can look at in in several ways. I figure that the people who like the book read it and recommend it to their friends. The people who are outraged by what I've done, pick it up each month to see how much more outraged they can get. It's easy to find comics that bore you or don't surprise you, but to find comics that royally piss you off is really difficult. Considering how many people complained about **Claremont's** version of X-MEN, I figured Chris's secret was pissing people off.

PAT: *Most writers fool around with the Hulk because they get tired of the version they were handed. Do you think the day will come when you will be burned out on the character and want to move on?*

PETER: If I ever reach the point where I think I have nothing to say, I'll move on.

Since I started on the book, this is what I have been building toward . . . but I had to work a long time at it. I wanted to make the grey Hulk as much of an individual personality as I could, so the reader could feel something for him. I knew once I got to the point where I reintegrated the personalities, it would have to be a one-issue story — or else it would lose the dramatic impact. As it is, some people say it went too fast.

"I hope five years from now I will have been able to have

LARRY STROMAN

All artwork accompanying this interview ©1992 Marvel Entertainment Group, Inc.

Artist Larry Stroman, originally from the Boston area, attributes his training to no one place in particular. Various courses in art schools and spending most of his adult life hanging out in libraries and museums make up the collective styles evident in Stroman's work. Currently, Stroman's work can be seen in Marvel's X-FACTOR comic written by Peter David. So far, the combined talents of Peter David and Larry Stroman have made for interesting

done my own comics. I hope to continue to be an artist."

Illustration by Larry Stroman with inks by Art Thibert.

"I made a living as a draftsman for a couple of years. I

reading that makes X-FACTOR just a little different from the other mutant titles.

PATRICK DANIEL O'NEILL: *How did it feel coming onto a book like X-FACTOR in which all of the characters, visually speaking, had been well established ahead of time? There really wasn't a chance for you to do a new take on the characters.*

LARRY STROMAN: That's what I did anyway. The reason it was so attractive for me to do the book was that when I got the offer I was only supposed to do only a few fill-in issues and then I was offered it on a regular basis. I said sure, but what do I get to do on the book? They told me that they were taking characters that had never had much done with them before and making them X-FACTOR. So I asked what do I do as far as costumes and they told me to do whatever I want. In that instance, I was working with characters that didn't have much exposure. It's almost like starting a whole new book.

PAT: *The first place I remember seeing your work was on ALIEN LEGION. What did you do before that?*

LARRY: I don't remember much before that, I just know that the first thing I had published was a two-part WORLD'S FINEST story. I don't even remember the issue numbers. After that I did some back-up stuff for AMERICAN FLAGG. That only lasted a few issues and then ALIEN LEGION came shortly after that.

PAT: *Were you interested in comics as a kid?*

LARRY: I had always been interested in comics, but I wasn't able to afford it until I was around 12 years old. Previously to that I would read the books my brother

moved to New York and did portraits for a few years."

would give me or whatever my friends would lend me.

PAT: *When you started working as an artist, were your goals set towards being a comic artist or did you have some other goals?*

LARRY: Yes, it was definitely to become a comics artist, but I became sidetracked by a lot of other stuff around the same time. I made a living as a draftsman for a couple of years. I moved to New York and did portraits for a few years.

PAT: *When you receive a plot or script, what's the first thing you do?*

LARRY: The first thing to do is get the first page done. I usually do the first page and then the last one. Why? I don't know, it's like, nothing comes before the first page or after the last page. It's always hard to finish the last few pages of a story. You've been working on a story for several weeks and you get down to the last few pages and it's sometimes a struggle to finish them. I usually do the last several pages first and then fill in the middle. It's a weird way of working, but that's the way I work. It drives the editor and writer crazy because because they never get the pages in proper sequence.

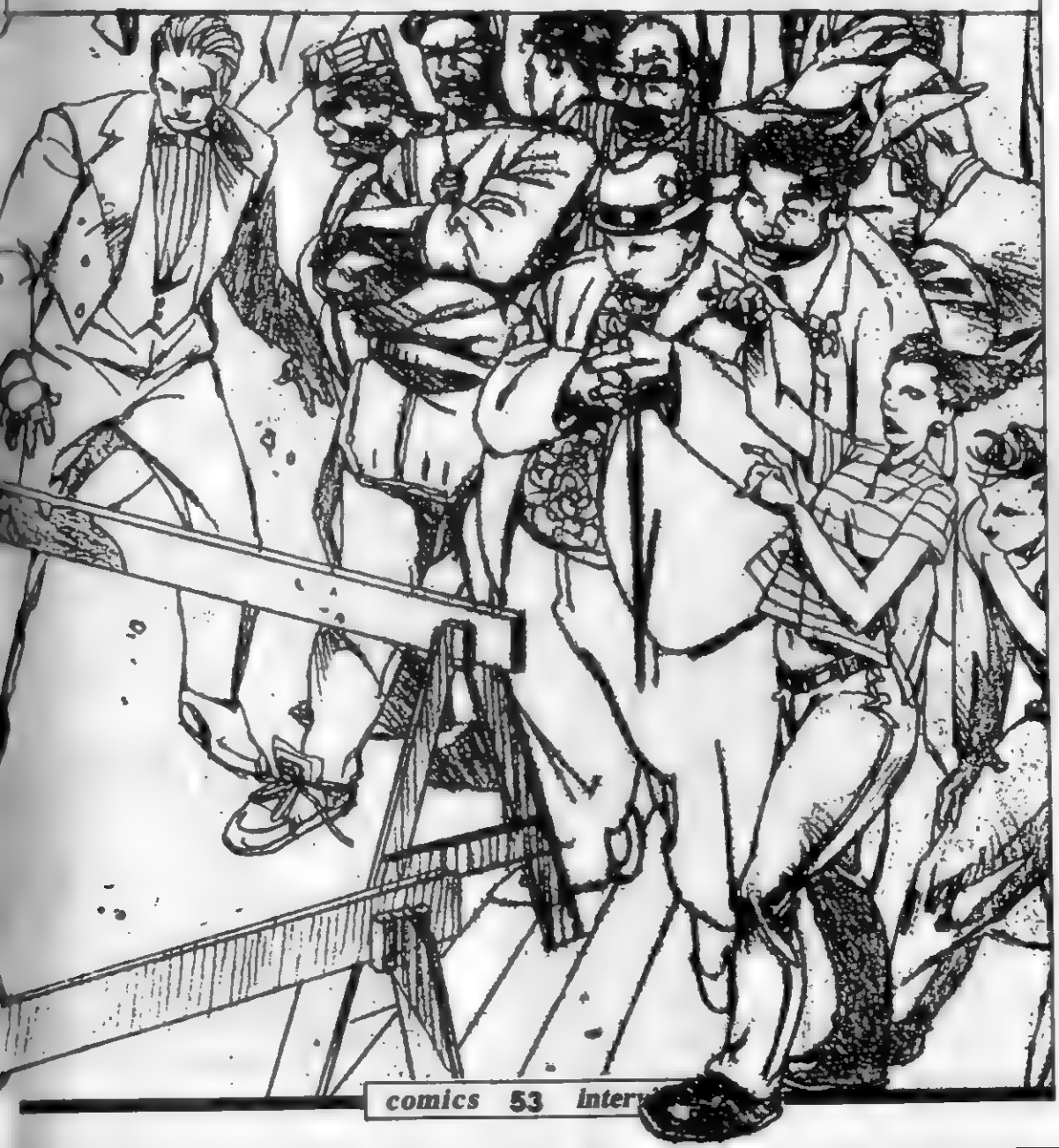
PAT: *How do you deal with the pacing of the story?*

LARRY: In terms of?

PAT: *In terms of the imaging of the storytelling.*

LARRY: It has nothing to do with storytelling, it's just the last image or page of the story. Regardless of what you draw first, you're always going to end up with the same drawings on the page. That's why you do preliminary sketches of characters. So that by the end of the story you know what they'll look like. With a lot of people it's easy for them to start drawing and then end up at the end of the book. When you work that way

Example of Larry's pencil work (note the various guest-star faces).



"A lot of the times when writers write, they don't

you end up concentrating on drawing what you like and then by the last four of five pages you have to draw a lot of tiny panels because you've disregarded what has happened with the rest of the story. What I do is use the first several pages and then the last several to do those really wild layouts and then focus on the story in between. That way, it doesn't look as if I've rushed the last couple of pages or had to force something into the final pages.

PAT: *Do you prefer working with plots or full scripts?*

LARRY: Definitely plots. It allows you do to your own pacing. A lot of times when writers write, they sometimes don't consider that they write more than you can fit into the page restraints that you have for the story. When I get a plot, I can determine how many images I can fit

consider that they write more than can fit into the page."

on a particular page.

PAT: *Some people have commented that since you and Peter David have taken over X-FACTOR, there hasn't been the typical Marvel slug-fests. Do you find that a problem from an artist's viewpoint?*

LARRY: That, to me, was one of the more attractive things about the book, the fact that it hasn't started off with everyone fighting. We're starting off the book by establishing the characters first. With most comics, you can go six issues before you find out enough information about any of these characters. This book starts out with characterizations that will lead up to all of the fighting.

PAT: *This sounds as if you're the type of artist that cares about the types of stories that comics can tell. Do you have anything in particular that you would*

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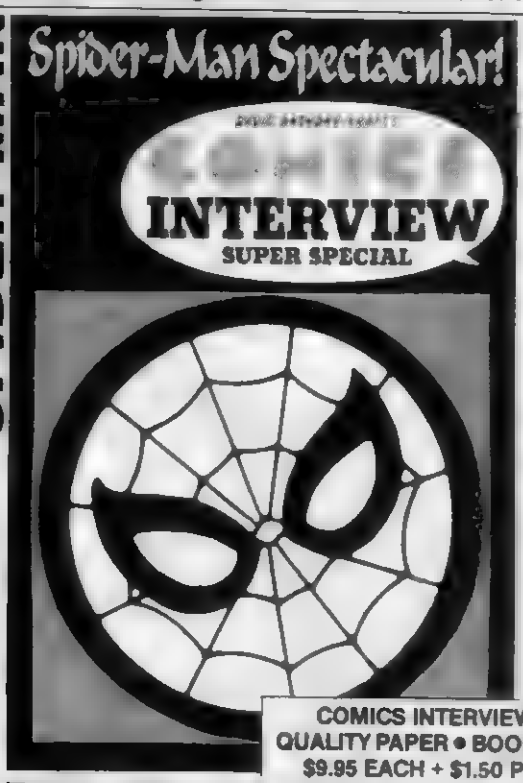

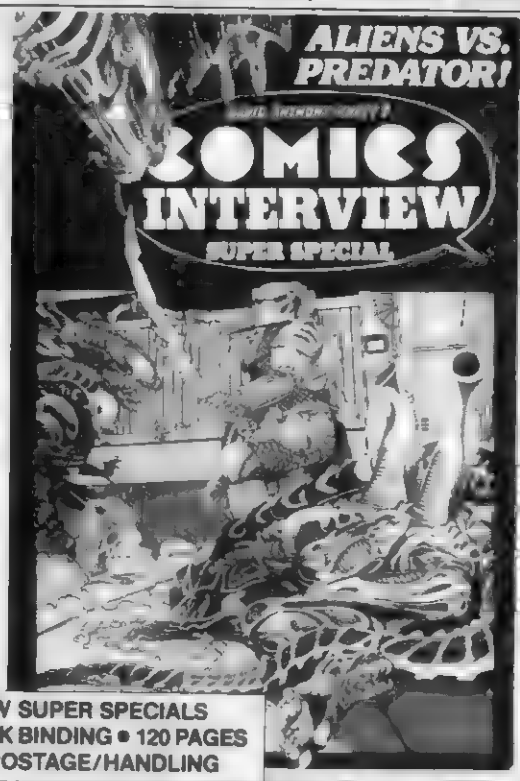

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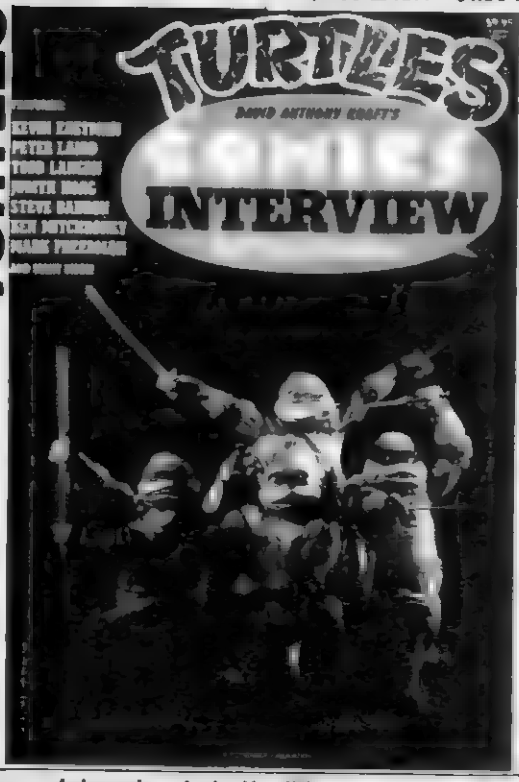

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"I never really enjoyed writing. I may at some point."

like to do story-wise somewhere down the line?

LARRY: Not necessarily. I have enjoyed most of the stories I have been given so far. Being able to work with the different writers is also good because they all have different approaches. All of it is just an experience anyway.

PAT: *Do you have any thoughts of ever writing and drawing?*

LARRY: I don't know. I've never really enjoyed writing. I may at some point — although I haven't seen too many examples of an artist doing his writing and doing a good job of it — the writing. I think you should focus on what you're good at. At the same time, the reason a lot of these guys, artists, are writing is that they're not pleased with the stories the writers are giving them. In that sense, the writer should pay more attention to the work that we, the artists, have to put into the book.

PAT: *An artist once said to me that a writer can describe, in a couple of words, a huge crowd scene with plenty of people, and it doesn't take any longer than for a writer to describe a scene with two people in a room, but the work of the artist is more difficult, more time-consuming.* "

LARRY: Right, if I get a story that says, Page 1, such and such walks through a crowd of a hundred people, it's a very short statement, but I, in turn, have to draw 100 separate people. I can't draw each person the same so it becomes time-consuming and I only have a certain amount of time to draw a story. I have to ask myself, if I draw the page without the 100 people, will it affect how the rest of the book works? The major problem we have to deal with constantly is what it is we have to focus on to make the story work best. That's why there can be major conflicts between artists and writers. A lot of times the writer gets upset because the artist didn't properly interpret what he wrote. A lot of times the artist will do what he has to do in order to get the book done on time.

PAT: *Have you ever worked with a writer who tried to give you thumbnails, things like that?*

LARRY: **Mike Baron** is the only one that I've ever got a story from that has done that. It really doesn't matter if I get thumbnails or not, I'm still going to end up drawing what I draw anyway. In a sense, it's like extra work for the writer.

These are referred to as "warm-ups," done quickly and loosely, again from Larry's sketchbook.

"I went from science fiction to superheroes—what the next

PAT: *Some writers say that they do thumbnails because it helps them pace the story. It helps them not over-write the story.*

LARRY: Some people work different ways and some people like being given as much info as possible to work with. Others enjoy having a minimum amount of information.

PAT: *Looking at the vast range of characters and material being published in comics today, is there anything in particular that you say, gee, I'd really like to do something like that? Either characters, or a genre.*

LARRY: In terms of genre, I'm sure I'll end up doing all of these different things anyway. It's a slow process, I went from a science-fiction book to a superhero book. What the next thing will be I don't know. In the meantime, I'm just trying to have fun. I want to learn and expand as I go along. I can't say that there is any one particular book that I would like to do

PAT: *Is there anyone's work that you particularly admire?*

LARRY: Sure, plenty of guys. **Javier Saltares, Mark Texiera, Dennis Cowan.** I have a good friend, a cartoonist, **Chuck Fraser,** he's just getting into comics. **Hannibal King,** another friend, **Keith Williams,** and **Garcia Lopez,** really too many to name.

PAT: *That's a very eclectic group of people.*

thing will be, I don't know. I'm just trying to have fun."

LARRY: Yeah, but that's my taste. People have found it odd that I haven't focussed on one artist. If you were to ask me the same question a year from now I'd probably give you an entirely different answer. I went through my phases of all the big names in the business. It's just whoever I feel is doing good work at the present time. I'm not particular of the style. If it's a good style then I like it.

PAT: *What strikes you first when you look at someone's work? Is it the surface elements of the inking or maybe the underlying draftsmanship of the storytelling?*

LARRY: With each person it's a completely different thing. Some people are good at design, others at architecture or costume design. I admire each person for their separate strong points. That's why I've never had an all-time favorite artist

PAT: *Where do you see yourself in five years?*

LARRY: I have no idea. *(Laughter.)*

PAT: *What would Larry Stroman like to be doing in five years?*

LARRY: I don't know. Hopefully, by that time I will have been able to have done my own comics and to have worked with all of the writers whose work I admire. I just hope to continue to be a comic artist and to be a little better than I am right now. Hopefully I'll have learned something over that period of time and continue to enjoy myself.

"One of the reasons I wanted to do this is because

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It's been a rough and rocky road for Hero Comics since we last spoke to Dennis Mallonee back in CI #64, with the whole thing going on hold for a while due to financial difficulties. But that's hardly an unusual occurrence for an independent comics publisher these days. What is heartening is that Dennis never gave up, and is coming back with a vengeance. More stories of FLARE and the LEAGUE OF CHAMPIONS family of characters (including Roy and Dann Thomas's CAPTAIN THUNDER AND BLUE BOLT) are being produced, and mine own SPARKPLUG mini-series will be out from Hero in August.

But the big news from Hero — and from Comics Interview Group — is a multi-part cross-company crossover between Dennis's LEAGUE OF CHAMPIONS heroes and CI's own SOUTHERN KNIGHTS. So let's cut to the chase, now, and see just what Dennis has in mind . . .

LOU MOUGIN: *Tell me about the SOUTHERN KNIGHTS/LEAGUE OF CHAMPIONS/FLARE crossover.*

DENNIS MALLONEE: That's a long story, but I suppose it began at the Capital sales conference three or four years ago. **David Anthony Kraft** and I have been on fairly good terms for quite some time and we got together with **Henry Vogel** and talked about what we could do to work together. That's when the idea for the crossover between THE CHAMPIONS and THE SOUTHERN KNIGHTS was suggested. I don't remember who suggested it — but it seemed like a good idea. These groups structurally have a lot in common; not only how the teams were formed, but also in the fact that they both operate in similar type worlds. There's not a huge number of super-powered people hang-

SOUTHERN KNIGHTS art accompanying interview TM & ©1988 The Guild; all FLARE and THE CHAMPIONS art TM & ©1988 Hero

I've been a big Southern Knights fan for so long."

THE LEAGUE OF CHAMPIONS™

FLARE

ing around in their worlds. Both backgrounds are magical and supernatural in nature. You couldn't do this type of crossover logically with a lot of other books. The Champions couldn't cross over with, say, the Avengers or the Justice League, because their worlds are so different.

LOU: *Is this going to be a trans-dimensional crossover, or are the Southern Knights and the Champions going to live in the same world?*

DENNIS: The working premise is that — as far as this story is concerned — the Champions and the Southern Knights operate in the same world. The story involves a time machine and magic, along with crossing over into alternate realities and such, so we did leave ourselves an out. If, down the road, we have to change things, we can always say that they're not of the same world, but rather that it was an effect from messing with time.

LOU: *Who are some of the other creators involved? Who's scripting what part?*

DENNIS: If all goes as planned, I will be scripting all of the crossover. **Henry Vogel** and I worked out a plot for it. Henry also provided a lot of dialogue in the course of the plots. It seemed better for us to have one writer do the final dialog for the entire thing; which doesn't mean that Henry won't have input. We want to make sure that Henry's characters have the proper voice, so he will be reviewing the dialogue to make sure that Southern Knights aren't saying or doing anything out of character.

LOU: *This sounds to me like Southern Knights will be getting back into publication following the crossover?*

DENNIS: That's the hope. That's one of the reasons I wanted to do this — because I've been such a big SOUTHERN KNIGHTS fan for so long.

LOU: *Tell me a little more about the creative teams on the book.*

DENNIS: There will be eight chapters in the series and four of the chapters will appear in the LEAGUE OF CHAMPIONS, two in THE SOUTHERN KNIGHTS, and the remaining two in FLARE. Linking all eight of those chapters, with me doing the scripting, will be **Mark Propst** doing the finished artwork, after the opening by **George Perez**.

Looking at the rest of the creative team, chapter one is done by **Howard Simpson.** Chapter two will be done by **Lou Manna;** Lou is the regular ICICLE artist. Chapter three will be done by **Howard Bender;** Howard has been doing some backup features for our FLARE reprint specials. Howard is also scheduled to be the regular artist on the FLARE first-edition series which will cover Flare as a teenager growing up in

FLARE

"There'll be eight chapters, four in CHAMPIONS, two

South America. Chapter four is being pencilled by **Scott Clark,** who is the regular artist for SPARKPLUG — which you know all about, since that is your book!

LOU: *Right! Buy that one, too, folks!* (Laughter.)

DENNIS: **Gordon Purcell** will be working on issue five; Gordon is tentatively scheduled because DC gave him more work than expected since they are going to take the STAR TREK book bi-weekly in the summer. Issue six will also be pencilled by **Mark Propst,** the regular FLARE artist; Mark also pencilled and/or inked a superb string of SOUTHERN KNIGHTS issues, way back when.

LOU: *We pretty much know who the guys in the white hats are going to be in the crossover; who will the guys in the black hats be?*

DENNIS: The villain for the SOUTHERN KNIGHTS will be Morrigan, the goddess who has fought the Knights in the past. She basically gets her hands on a time machine, enabling her to go into the past to gain more followers for the present. The Champions get involved because Rose's family has always been in opposition to Morrigan's religion. When Rose finds out that Morrigan is going after the time machine that the Southern Knights have, Rose gets herself and the Champions involved. There's also the secondary villain, Dread, from the SOUTHERN KNIGHTS. Dread has the power to evoke emotions in other people. From the Champions side we'll be dealing with a couple of Flare villains. Thugmaster and Darkon are the two main villains. Darkon only shows up in the first issue or so. The Thugmaster isn't evil in the true sense of the word; the Thugmaster is a trader in information; he provides personnel services for people that can afford to pay for it. Morrigan is trying to find out where the heck the time machine is and she can't do it on her own. Thugmaster provides her with the information that the time machine is in the basement of the Southern Knights' mansion. Since that was the most logical place to look and Morrigan couldn't figure it out, she gets annoyed and uses

Electrode, Connie Ronnin, and Icestar caught in a 20th-century world that's very different from the one they know.

in SOUTHERN KNIGHTS and two in FLARE."

her powers to humiliate the Thugmaster. At that point, Thugmaster becomes concerned because his information is that Morrigan is powerless — and that obviously isn't the case. Since the Thugmaster now has useful information concerning Morrigan, he peddles that information to the League of Champions by phoning up Flare and asking what they're willing to pay. Not knowing if the Champions are enough to handle Morrigan, he goes down to Atlanta to check out the Southern Knights. He busts Dread out of jail to have him go against the Knights to see how strong they are. The first two issues take place simultaneously — which is why the Champions couldn't get hold of the Southern Knights in the first place; the Knights are busy out fighting Dread and the Thugmaster's forces. What happens during all this is that Morrigan breaks into the Knights' basement to get at the time machine; the Champions break in at about the same time the Knights return home; and a fight ensues. Morrigan panics and has Darkon activate the time machine which sends most of the Champions on a journey through time and space to other worlds. Because Darkon is standing at the center of the effect, he gets blown to smithereens and is scattered through time. We'll be dealing with this in an issue of FLARE, a little bit down the road. Morrigan and Rose are not affected by the time machine going off. Rose's power involves the power to travel through dimensions — if she doesn't want to go then she's not going anywhere. Rose obviously didn't want to leave Morrigan alone with the time machine so she stays there. Morrigan doesn't notice Rose and figures everyone is gone and that she has won; Rose taps her on the shoulder, Morrigan turns around, and Rose decks her. Rose then uses the time machine to try and rescue the heroes.

Marksman, Aramis Merrow, and Kristin Austin trapped in a world of the 21st century that will seem awfully familiar to fans who have read the adventures of Eternity Smith.

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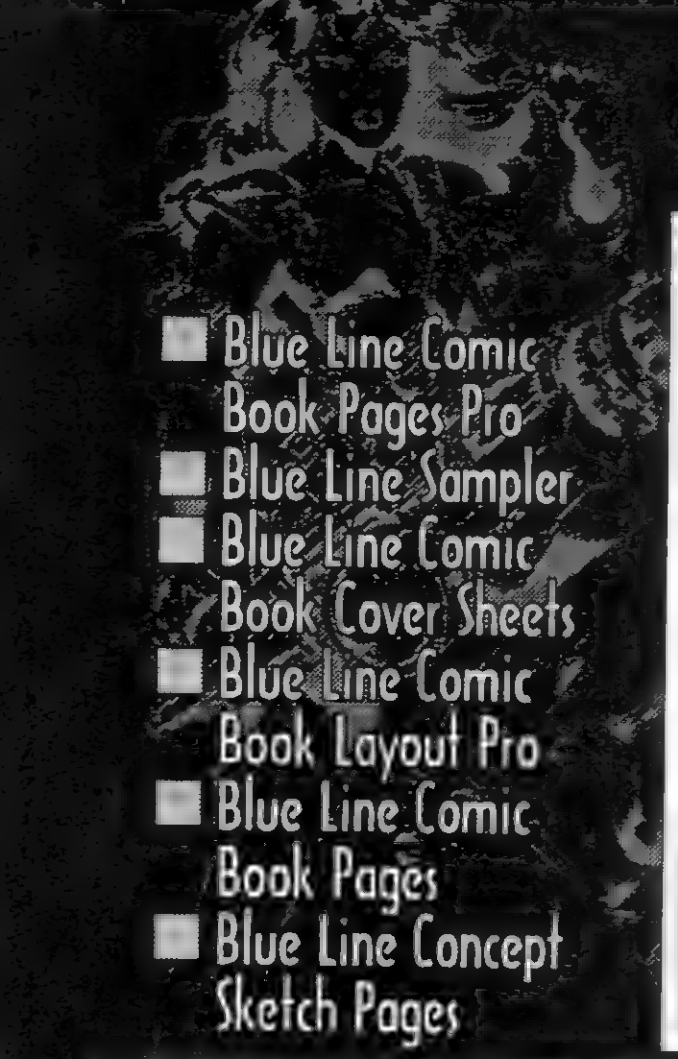

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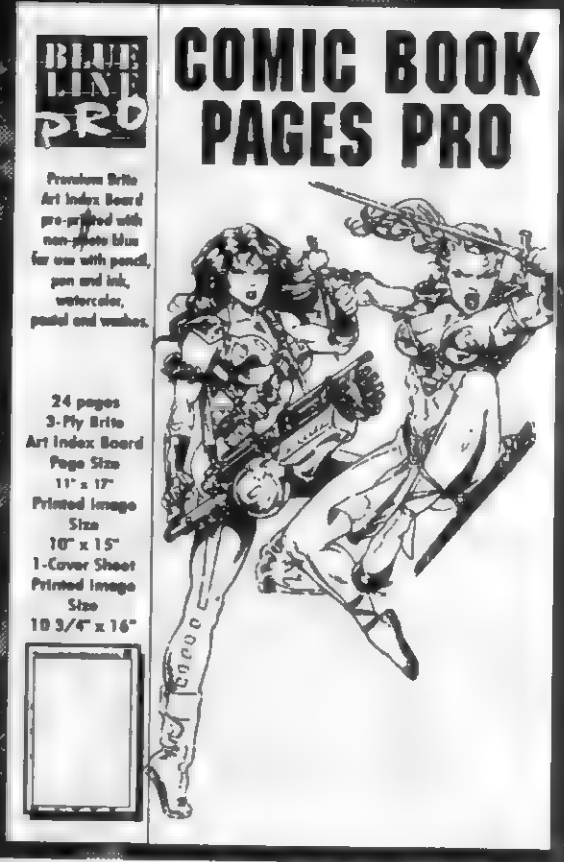
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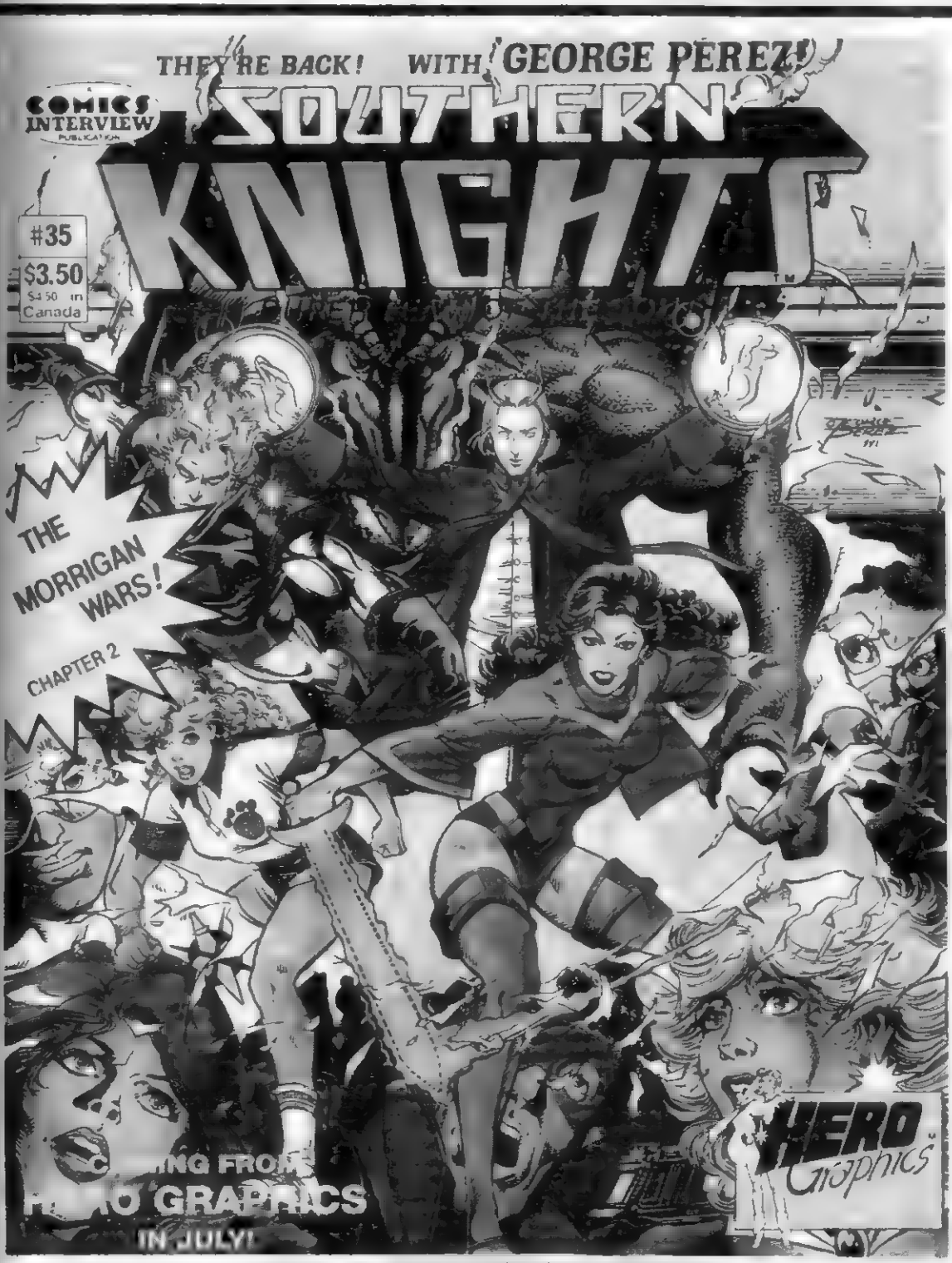
"There are so many good possibilities for crossovers."



Art by George Perez for cover of SOUTHERN KNIGHTS #35.

LOU: *When is the series scheduled to come out?*

DENNIS: One of the things I want to discuss is the distribution end of the comics. Whenever FLARE is given adequate display at the retail level, FLARE invariably produces more dollar revenue than ninety percent of the Marvel or DC books. Say CAPTAIN AMERICA sells for $1.25 and FLARE sells for $3.95, the question arises — which book is selling better? The usual

"Champions & Southern Knights are in the same world."

answer from the retail standpoint is, of course, CAPTAIN AMERICA is selling better because it is a Marvel comic, and Marvel comics sell better than comics from other publishers. And that's usually as far as the analysis goes. Whether it's true or not is irrelevant, because that is what's perceived out there. Retailers and distributors believe that Marvel comics outsell comics from other publishers even if it isn't true.

LOU: *But the dollar value they're taking in from FLARE is equal to, say CAPTAIN AMERICA?*

DENNIS: Exceeds! The dollar volume for retailers that actually carry FLARE exceeds ninety percent of the product produced by Marvel or DC. This is not true in general, because clearly half of the retailers won't carry anything that isn't published by Marvel or DC. A good chunk of the retailers that do carry products other than Marvel or DC only carry a small chunk, and then they put it in the back of the store somewhere. The psychology I have to deal with is that retailers don't undestand that comics by Marvel or DC do not sell any better than good comics produced by other publishers.

LOU: *I guess, in defense of the retailers, I have to say that there is a glut of independent publishers . . .*

DENNIS: You'll have to give me examples to justify that statement, because the real glut is coming from Marvel; the glut is coming from DC. Anyway, the point of all this is that the reason we're crossing over with the SOUTHERN KNIGHTS/LEAGUE OF CHAMPIONS/FLARE is to give retailers who have not been carrying our titles a real excuse to carry our material — so that they can see just how well our product sells. Let me give you an anecdote based on an event here in Santa Monica: One of our artists went into a local comics shop to pick up the sixth issue of FLARE the day it went on sale, and someone beat him to the last remaining copy. He went to the counter and asked the clerk if they were going to get any more in; he was told it wasn't very likely, because it didn't sell very well. Here's a store that sold out all ten copies in a matter of a few hours — and then they say it doesn't sell very well? When pressed on the matter, the clerk said it doesn't sell well, because it isn't a Marvel comic. My theory when we first started doing comics was that — if we did a comic that sold well — we would start getting orders. That has turned out not to be true. If you're producing a good product that sells and you can't get people to carry it, what's the answer? I don't know the answer.

LOU: *I guess that's where marketing comes in.*

DENNIS: Well, yes, there's marketing and then there's unethical marketing. To a large extent, in my mind, the double covers, bagged issues, card inserts — all that stuff — is borderline unethical.

LOU: *I'd also say it is a marketing tool,*

THE ANSWER IS THAT TIME HAS BEEN KNOCKED ASKEW. WE SAW IT HAPPEN LAST MONTH, AS THE LEAGUE OF CHAMPIONS AND THE SOUTHERN KNIGHTS FOUGHT TO PREVENT THE GODDESS MORRIGAN FROM GAINING CONTROL OF HER OWN PAST. THEY SUCCEEDED IN THAT, BUT SOMETHING WENT WRONG. NOW ICESTAR OF THE CHAMPIONS, AND ELECTRODE AND CONNIE RONIN OF THE KNIGHTS FIND THEMSELVES STANDING TOGETHER AS ALL OTHERS, MORRIGAN INCLUDED, SEEM TO VANISH ABOUT THEM.

Art from SOUTHERN KNIGHTS #36 by Scott Clark and Mark Propst.

Flare, Icicle, and Dragon working together to find a way to escape from the 18th century.

"I've just read the entire run of SOUTHERN

HENRY VOGEL

Henry Vogel is the co-creator/writer of X-THIEVES and SOUTHERN KNIGHTS, the latter of which is coming out of hiatus soon as host to a crossover with LEAGUE OF CHAMPIONS and FLARE. After talking with Dennis Mallonee, I decided to hunt up Henry and get his half of the story. So here it is . . .

LOU MOUGIN: *What are your expectations concerning the SOUTHERN KNIGHTS/CHAMPIONS/FLARE crossover?*

HENRY: Oh, I don't know — to sell a million copies? It's tough to say, the market being the way it is. We're talking a wait-and-see attitude. If the response is good for THE KNIGHTS, we could bring them out of hiatus.

LOU: *The Christmas issue was the last issue of THE KNIGHTS?*

HENRY: Correct.

LOU: *And X-THIEVES?*

HENRY: It's been a while since we've had an issue of X-THIEVES — but we're talking about quite a few things planned for them.

LOU: *I've just finished reading the entire run of THE SOUTHERN KNIGHTS and it really was a well-written book. What was the reason for the book going on hiatus?*

HENRY: For one thing, the market for black-and-white comics has gone to hell. I needed a break, also, since I had started a new job that was more mentally demanding than my previous job. I was less able to come home from my job and spend three more hours writing every night.

LOU: *The writing has been consistently strong during your run on the book and particularly well-handled were the characterizations. The quality was always consistently high.*

HENRY: Thank you!

LOU: *Has the crossover given you new ideas for future works?*

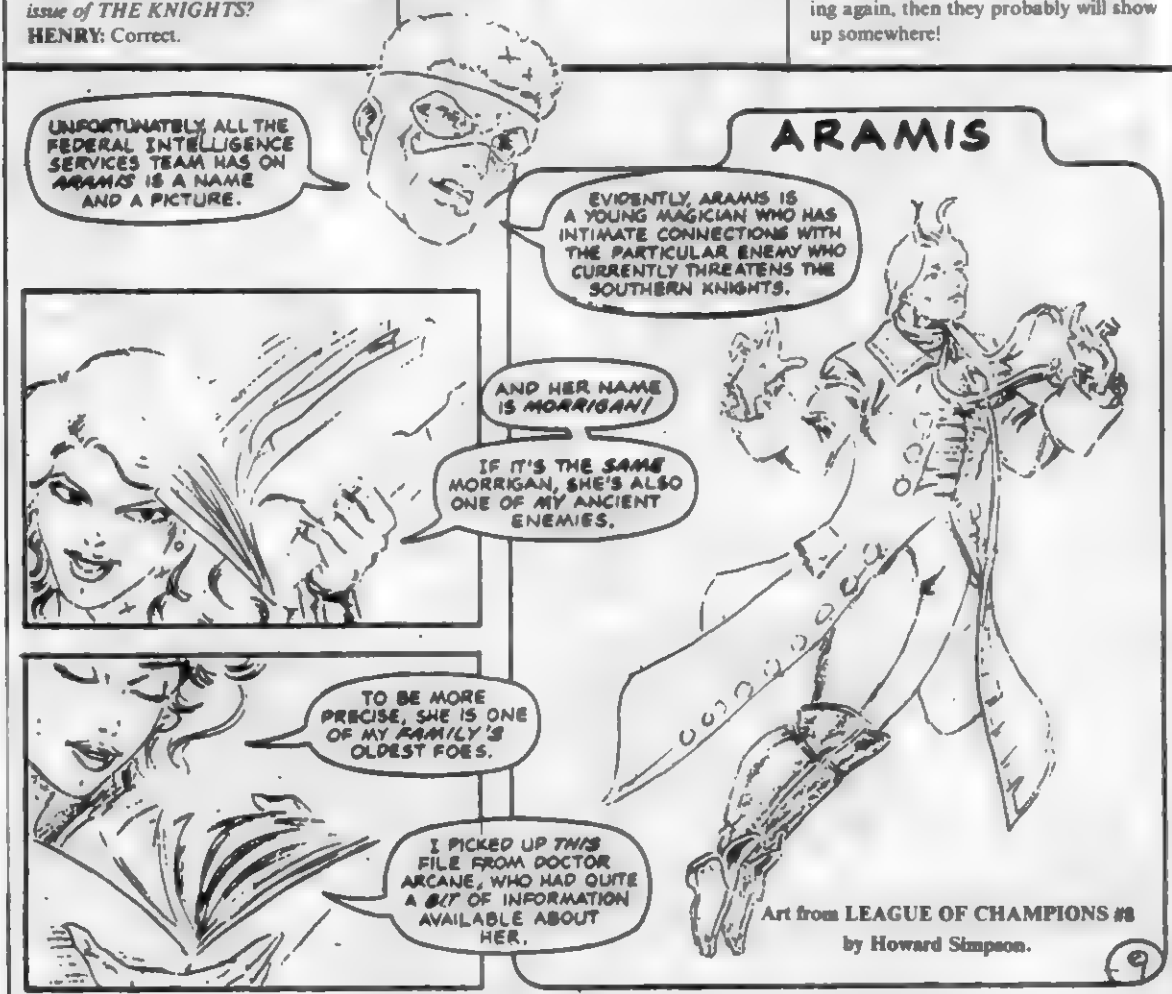
HENRY: Sure, plenty of ideas — although nothing concrete. There are a few avenues that I'd like to explore. I do have some ideas for a storyline I call "Psychic Wars," but I don't want to go into too many details on that right now.

LOU: *If the book does come back as a regular series, will it be as a black-and-white or maybe as a color title?*

HENRY: Barring a financial miracle, I would have to say that the book would come back as a black-and-white.

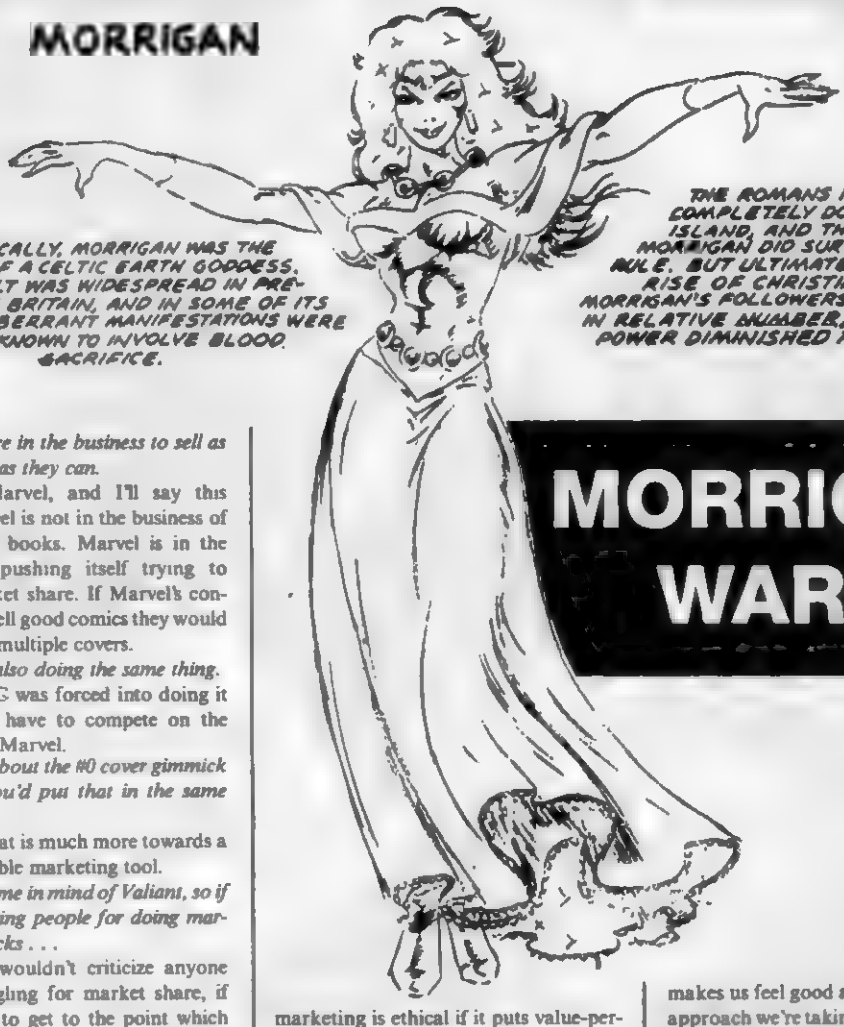
LOU: *Any chance of seeing the awesome assassins, Carl and Larry, in this crossover?*

HENRY: Not in this crossover — although we have speculated about bringing them back in a little mini-series. If THE SOUTHERN KNIGHTS get going again, then they probably will show up somewhere!


UNFORTUNATELY, ALL THE FEDERAL INTELLIGENCE SERVICES TEAM HAS ON ARAMIS IS A NAME AND A PICTURE.
ARAMIS
EVIDENTLY, ARAMIS IS A YOUNG MAGICIAN WHO HAS INTIMATE CONNECTIONS WITH THE PARTICULAR ENEMY WHO CURRENTLY THREATENS THE SOUTHERN KNIGHTS.
AND HER NAME IS MORRIGAN!
IF IT'S THE SAME MORRIGAN, SHE'S ALSO ONE OF MY ANCIENT ENEMIES.
TO BE MORE PRECISE, SHE IS ONE OF MY FAMILY'S OLDEST FOES.
I PICKED UP THIS FILE FROM DOCTOR ARCANE, WHO HAD QUITE A BIT OF INFORMATION AVAILABLE ABOUT HER.

Art from LEAGUE OF CHAMPIONS #8 by Howard Simpson.

KNIGHTS. It really was a well-written book."


MORRIGAN
HISTORICALLY, MORRIGAN WAS THE NAME OF A CELTIC EARTH GODDESS. HER CULT WAS WIDESPREAD IN PRE-ROMAN BRITAIN, AND IN SOME OF ITS MOST ABERRANT MANIFESTATIONS WERE OFTEN KNOWN TO INVOLVE BLOOD SACRIFICE.
THE ROMANS NEVER COMPLETELY DOMINATED THE ISLAND, AND THE CULT OF MORRIGAN DID SURVIVE ROMAN RULE. BUT ULTIMATELY, WITH THE RISE OF CHRISTIANITY, MORRIGAN'S FOLLOWERS [illegible] IN RELATIVE NUMBER, AND HER POWER DIMINISHED ACCORDINGLY.

MORRIGAN WARS

because they're in the business to sell as many comics as they can.

DENNIS: Marvel, and I'll say this bluntly, Marvel is not in the business of selling comic books. Marvel is in the business of pushing itself trying to increase market share. If Marvel's concern were to sell good comics they would not be doing multiple covers.

LOU: *DC is also doing the same thing.*

DENNIS: DC was forced into doing it because they have to compete on the same level as Marvel.

LOU: *What about the #0 cover gimmick — I guess you'd put that in the same category?*

DENNIS: That is much more towards a more reasonable marketing tool.

LOU: *It puts me in mind of Valiant, so if you're criticizing people for doing marketing gimmicks . . .*

DENNIS: I wouldn't criticize anyone who is struggling for market share, if you're trying to get to the point which you should be at . . . and that's what Valiant is trying to do. I don't have a problem with that. You have to do things to get your product into the store. What bugs me is the kind of thing that Marvel has done. You have a product that you know is going to sell, but you do something specifically to get retailers to buy more copies than they can reasonably expect to sell. We had what — eight million copies of X-MEN #1 in its various forms? — and two weeks later they were showing up in the fifty-cent boxes at comic conventions. You're looking at maybe six and a half million of those copies that never sold to the consumer! That kind of marketing approach is unethical — because you're not trying to sell product, you're trying to foist it off on your middle man!

LOU: *I think in the long run that type of stuff will prove to be counter-productive.*

DENNIS: It's already counter-productive. What I'm saying is that marketing is ethical if it puts value-per-dollar in the hands of the people. Marvel didn't accomplish that with its multiple covers. The #0 issue that Valiant did is reasonable, because it did put a value per dollar into the hands of the people. The method they used forcing people to get eight issues to get the one thing they really want is borderline — because there may be people that didn't want some of that stuff. Our major problem is *not* getting the book to sell. Once it's out there, it sells! We have to find a way to persuade retailers to *carry* the thing. Our marketing for May through September is going to be a bonus pack. With a minimum order of ten copies of any of our titles — and your SPARKPLUG book is included, Lou — we'll give five extra copies free. I think that is the most ethical approach one can take in marketing, because you're actually giving something of value to the retailer, in exchange for a commitment from the retailer to carry the book. That approach makes us feel good about the marketing approach we're taking along with getting something into the stores that, once the fans see it, they'll want it.

LOU: *If the SOUTHERN KNIGHTS/CHAMPIONS/FLARE crossover works, is there a possibility of crossovers with other independent titles? I'm thinking of other groups such as Elementals, Hero Alliance, and Justice Machine — to name just a few.*

DENNIS: Sure, I would be open to doing that. We little guys have to scratch each other's backs. We have spoken with **Henry Vogel** with the possibility of crossing over the X-THIEVES. Since we're dealing with teams, the idea would be to team X-THIEVES with ICICLE. Sort of a side thing, maybe even with Crissy Claus. Think about it, Crissy being Santa Claus's granddaughter, she can get into any house she wants without being seen. This would be perfect if you're a thief; just don't let Crissy know what you're doing. There are so many good possibilities for crossover ideas!

SOUTHERN KNIGHTS

by Henry Vogel

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#3 ART & COVER: MORRISON $5
#4 ART & COVER: MORRISON $5
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#6 ART & COVER: WOJTKIEWICZ $5
#7 ART & COVER: WOJTKIEWICZ $5
#8 ART & COVER: WOJTKIEWICZ $5
#9 ART & COVER: WOJTKIEWICZ $15
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KNIGHTS
#17 COVER: PROPST ART: PEPPERS $15
#18 COVER: PROPST ART: PEPPERS $5
#19 ART & COVER: MARK PROPST $5
KNIGHTS
#20 COVER: PROPST ART: LAMPORT $3
SOUTHERN KNIGHTS
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#30 COVER: PROPET ART: VARIOUS $3
#31 COVER: PROPET ART: VARIOUS $3
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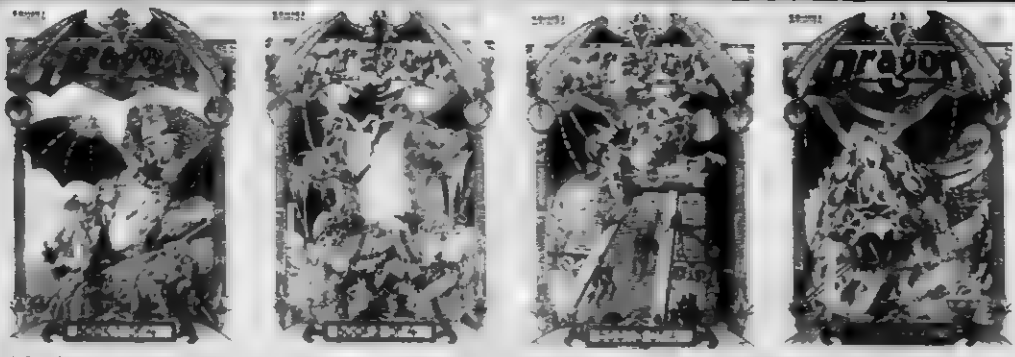

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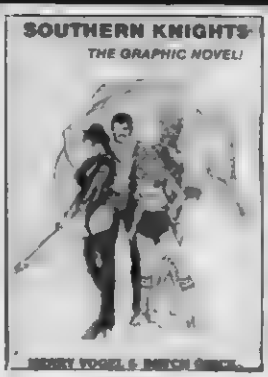

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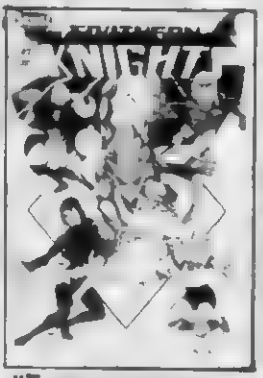

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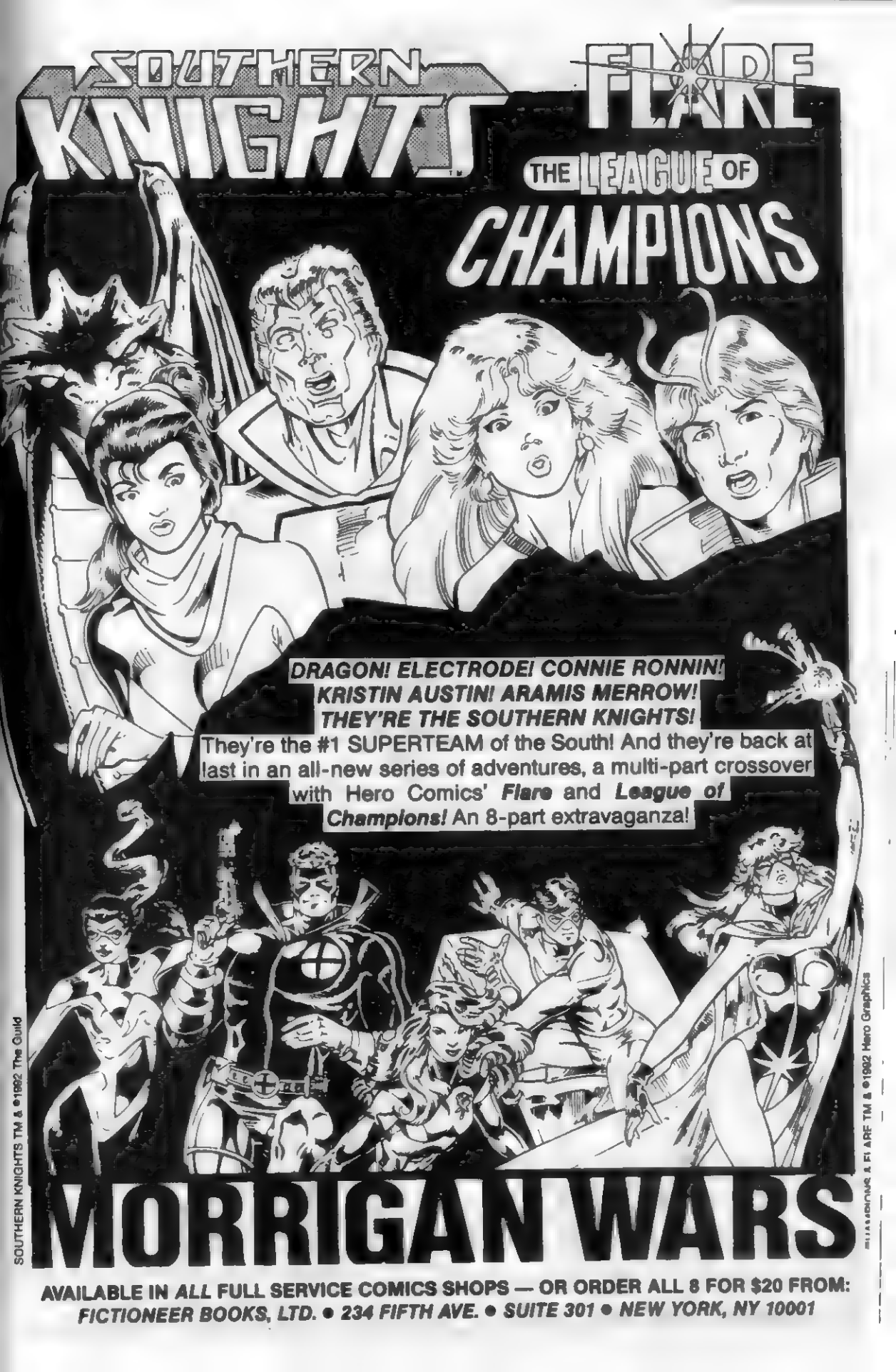
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"I am the supervising producer for X-MEN.

Animated X-MEN model art here — and overleaf spread — by Rick Hoberg.

Bishop.

X-MEN is an extremely complicated show."

Prof. X.

WILL MEUGNIOT

Will Meugniot is no stranger to the comics world and is best remembered for his artwork on DNAGENTS. Will also worked for a period of time for Marvel Comics and pencilled the Tigra series. Currently, Will is working in animation, where he has compiled an impressive string of credits producing a number of animated series. Comics fans are about to be re-introduced to the name of Will Meugniot as he is the Supervising Producer on the new X-MEN animated series that premieres on Fox this fall . . .

CHARLES S. NOVINSKIE: *To start with something basic, tell us a little about where you work, Will.*

WILL MEUGNIOT: I am supervising producer for a company by the name of GRAZ Entertainment, which is located in North Hollywood, the heart of the animation industry.

CHARLES: *I'll be speaking with Larry Houston a little bit later. Larry is the line producer of the series. What exactly are the duties of supervising and line producers?*

WILL: In this instance, my function on the show is that of a consultant, because of my comics experience. Larry is doing all of the prep work on the show. Larry is the one that hands out the storyboards and edits them, whereas I handle the political problems that might arise from doing X-MEN. X-MEN is a very complicated show with lots of different groups of people involved. I also help edit scripts, edit models, and assist in color shoices, a variety of jobs.

CHARLES: *What company will be handling the actual animation?*

WILL: The animation is going to a studio in Korea by the name of Akom. They're also doing some episodes of BATMAN and in the past they've worked on shows such as ROBOCOP and TINY TOONS. They're a very large company and any half-hour animated show produced, they end up doing some of it.

CHARLES: *Basically, your involvement and that of GRAZ Entertainment is the pre-production of the series?*

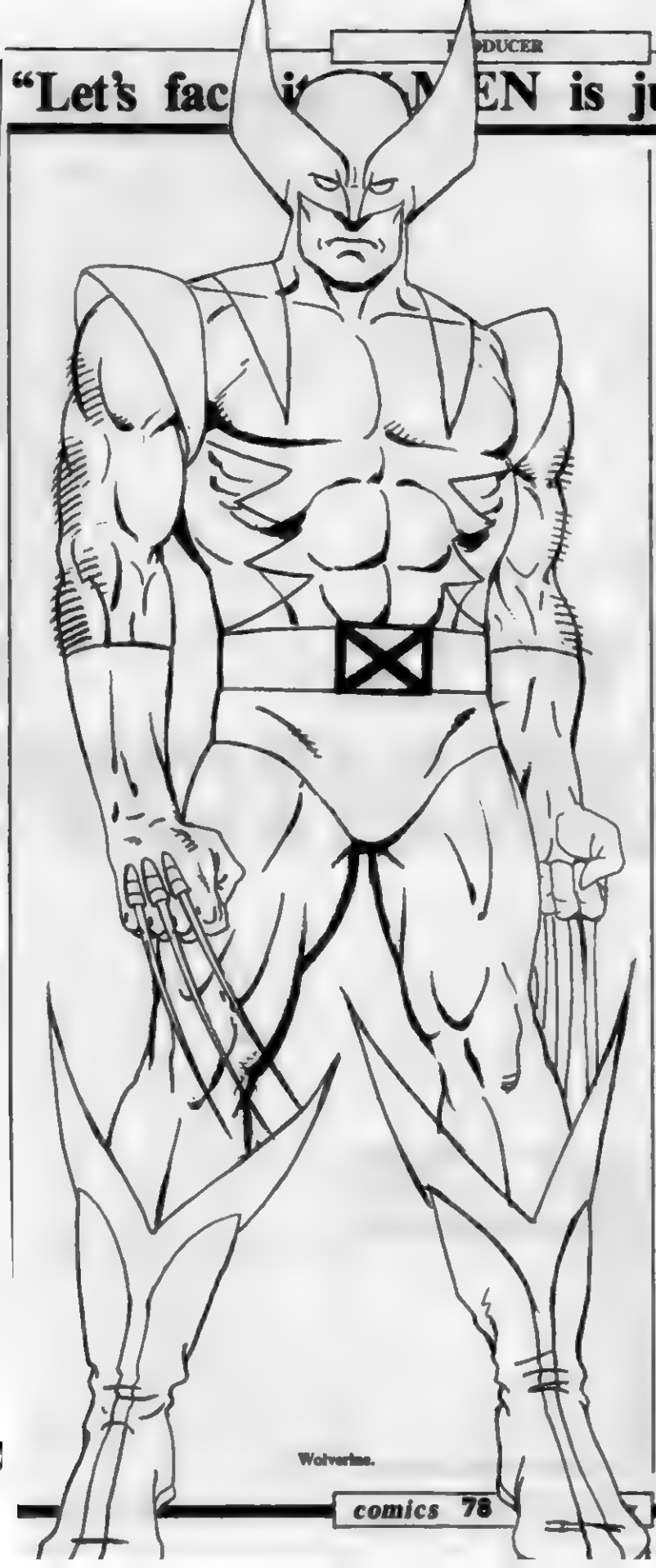
WILL: Exactly. We're responsible for the storyboards, model sheets and exposure sheets. The company that actually has the contract for the production of the series is Saban Entertainment. They're the ones that actually contracted the writers on the show. Saban is the studio on record for doing the series and we're subcontracted by them.

CHARLES: *How is the animation being handled? Will it be done with individual cels or will the animation be computer generated?*

VITAL STATISTICS

Name: Will Meugniot
Born: 24 July 1951 — Everret, WA
Interests: Japanese comics and animation
Wife: Jo Meugniot (colorist for Disney)
Current projects: 3-issue mini-series from Fantagraphics, EXOTIC FANTASY, with never-before-seen sketchbook material.

"Let's fac[e] it, X-MEN is just about the



Wolverine.

WILL: The bulk of the show will be conventional cel animation. There is some discussion that there will be some computer work done on it — but we have a very bad time problem with production because it was picked up very late. There are some things we're talking about doing but there might not be enough time to get it into production.

CHARLES: *The X-MEN animated series is something we've heard about for years now. How did it eventually come about and, more importantly, how did it end up at Fox?*

WILL: A lot of it came about because of **Margaret Loesch,** who is Fox Children's President.

CHARLES: *And who was, at one time, the president of Marvel Production.*

WILL: Exactly. She was there when they were doing MUPPET BABIES. She was at Marvel when we produced the original X-MEN pilot, also. Margaret has always been a very strong advocate for the program, but business deals always kept the show down. It was scheduled to go three or four times over as many years and something always came up. Let's face it, X-MEN is about the best-selling property in the world right now. Margaret basically said that, if someone could straighten out the business end of it, she'd guarantee the show a time slot. When all was said and done Saban came up with a business proposal that won Marvel's heart.

CHARLES: *It should be interesting to see what time slot a show such as X-MEN will be given. I would guess that the audience is going to be more diverse than the average Saturday morning cartoon viewers.*

WILL: The tentative slot is 11 a.m. Saturday morning and the show is scheduled to appear in mid-October. The placement of the show at 11 a.m. by Fox is very intentional. We're leading into the SUPER DAVE show, so the intention there is to have the show lead into their adult programming.

CHARLES: *How many episodes are scheduled for this year?*

WILL: Thirteen half-hour shows.

CHARLES: *With so many X-Men around, old, new, and splinter groups such as X-Force and X-Factor, who will be in the series?*

WILL: Our core group will be composed of Professor X, Jean Grey, Cyclops, Rogue, Storm, Gambit, Jubilee and, of course, Wolverine.

CHARLES: *No Beast or Iceman?*

WILL: Well, yes, they're not what we call core members — but the Beast is

best-selling property in ght now."

involved for two episodes and will be a recurring character throughout the series. Archangel will also be making an appearance, along with Cable.

CHARLES: *You mention Cable; will we be seeing crossovers with other groups such as X-Force?*

WILL: No, not really. The series is just X-MEN. The problem with the series is exactly that — the X-Men mythos is so dense that there is so much material available. There's a lot to do over the first thirteen episodes; who are the X-Men and why, that sort of stuff. Any time we introduce a villain, we have to do a back story on him.

CHARLES: *Can you give us a few examples of what we can see during the course of the first season — sort of an episode-by-episode rundown?*

WILL: Sure. During the first two episodes we introduce the Sentinels and the Sentinel universe. That background information will lead up to Genosha.

CHARLES: *So the series will tie in to relatively current events in the Marvel comics?*

WILL: Pretty much so. The frustrating thing about it is that we have to assume that most of the audience doesn't know the history of the X-Men. The first thirteen episodes are sort of the pastiche. It's like the quick-read version of what's gone on in the comic for the past ten years.

CHARLES: *Good luck!* (Laughter.)

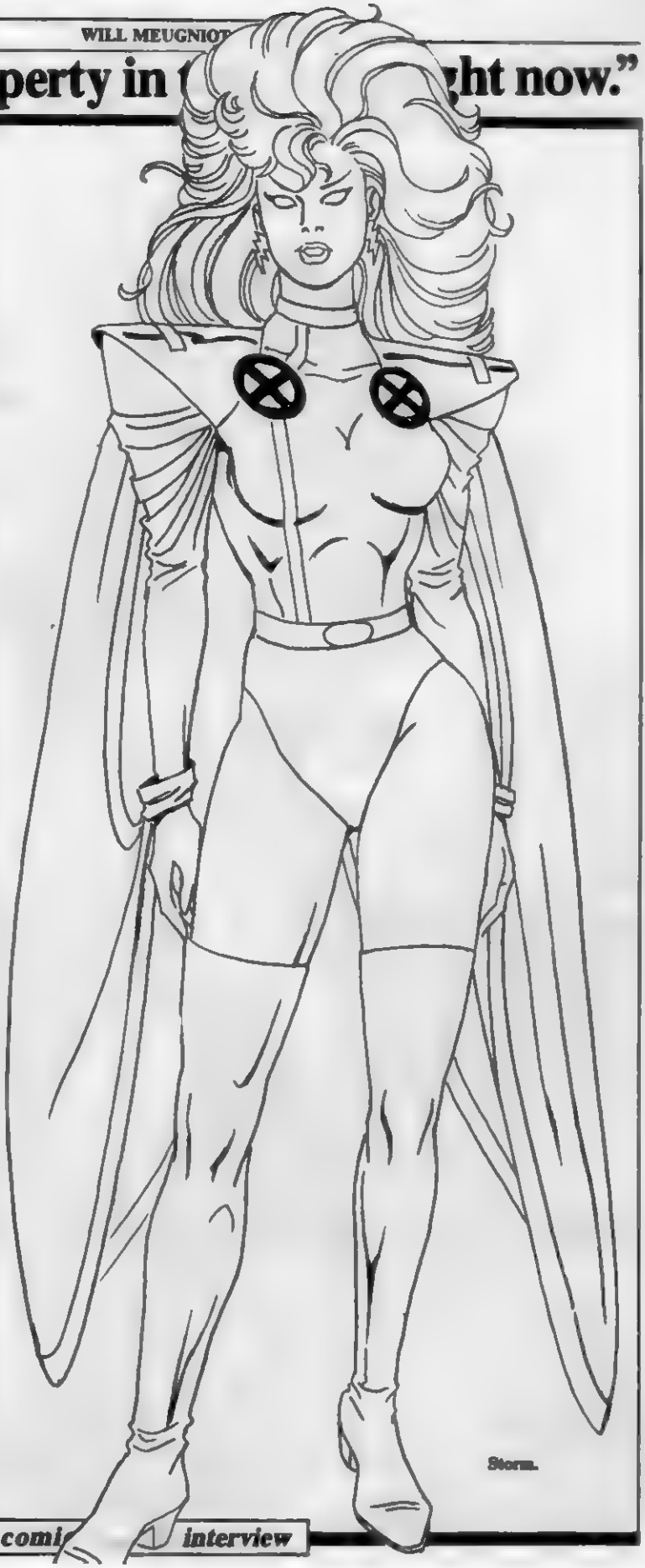
WILL: Well, yeah, it has been quite a challenge. We take quite a bit for granted, having read the material ourselves. Oddly enough, the person that has been our harshest critic — making sure that the uninitiated can keep up with the series — is **Stan Lee.** We're working hard to make sure that the show is easily accessible to the commoner.

CHARLES: *Are any of the writers on the series also comics writers?*

WILL: **Don Glut** wrote one episode for us. I think comics fans will be familiar with his name.

CHARLES: *I've wondered what Don was up to; it's been years since he's done any comics work.*

WILL: Well, you know, it's interesting. Here on the West Coast most of us have found a much better living in television work. The story editors are **Eric DeWald** and **Mark Edens.** They're probably best known for their work as story editors on BEETLEJUICE. I have to say they've done an amazing job in bringing this very complicated universe to life. They have thirteen episodes in which to compress about two hundred issues of comics material. The first two episodes are two-



Storm.

"We'll also be introducing a new character

Here and facing page: Art by Will Meugniot for EXOTIC FANTASY #1.

EXOTIC FANTASY art here and facing page copyright ©1992 Will Meugniot

by the name of Morph to the X-MEN show."

parters that introduce Jubilee to the X-Men and bring in the Sentinels. Episodes three and four are a Magneto storyline. Episode five will involve the Morlocks and then six focuses on Wolverine, after an incident in which he is rejected by Jean Grey. We'll be exploring the Cyclops/Jean Grey relationship. We'll also be dealing with the Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse along with some other fairly involved storylines. We'll also be introducing a new character by the name of Morph. He's sort of like the Changeline except that DC already has the name trademarked. *(Laughter.)*

CHARLES: *Will the Morph character then be appearing in the X-MEN comic?*

WILL: I don't know for sure. There has been talk of an X-MEN comic based on the TV episodes.

CHARLES: *If the series is picked up for another season, will the stories continue to tie in to the comic?*

WILL: The plan right now is that if the series continues, the stories will move closer and closer to being in line with the comic. Obviously, some things will have to be handled a little differently for television. Death is a very touchy subject, as is dealing with sexual relationships. Barring the series bombing, Fox is planning the series to run as 65 half-hour episodes. Our intention is to do 13 episodes this year, 13 next year and then do the remaining 39.

CHARLES: *That schedule isn't really typical of a series that might run on the other major networks, or is it?*

WILL: No, not really. Fox has the advantage over the other networks because they have their Fox afternoon block. Normally, if you have a network show, it will get picked up for 13 half-hour episodes the first year. If the show is a success, then it's picked up for eight more episodes the following year, and eight the following year and so on. If the show is faltering they can pick up as few as four episodes. With Fox, their feeling is that if a show is successful on Saturday it can go to a daily show on their afternoon block.

CHARLES: *Getting back to you personally, you worked in comics for some time?*

WILL: Right. **Mark Evanier** and I worked on DNAGENTS for, like, two years. DNAGENTS was one of the first creator-owned comics.

CHARLES: *Do you still read comics?*

WILL: Sure! Not like I did when I was a kid, but **Larry Houston** and I, and a few

of the producers from the BATMAN series, will go down to a comics shop at lunch time and browse through the comics. When DAK did his index in the 100th issue of COMICS INTERVIEW I was listed as an animator, but in my brain I still register as a comic-book artist rather than an animator — even though I've done about 300 or 400 half-hours of animation and maybe only 20 or 30 comics. As a child, I wanted to be a comic artist, and so I think that's why it still registers that way in my brain.

CHARLES: *You've worked both in comics and in animation — any major similarities or differences?*

WILL: Creatively I think comics are, in a way more satisfying, because you have fewer levels of editorial input. I find it interesting that when I'm doing one exclusively over the other I always miss the one I'm *not* doing. In live television stuff you get to work in real time and you get to direct real live actors. You also work for a much larger audience in television. If you worked for an audience of seven million for television you'd have a real bomb on your hands. Business-wise, it's still much easier to own characters of comic books than television characters. With comics, you draw it and then you're done. With television, it's a collaborative process where you work with literally hundreds of people to get the job done. I'd be hard pressed to say I liked one more than the other. There's something neat about seeing your name in print in a comic. On the other hand, there's something special about turning on your television and seeing your name on screen.

CHARLES: *You've been in animation for quite some time now. Do you have some memorable projects that you worked on?*

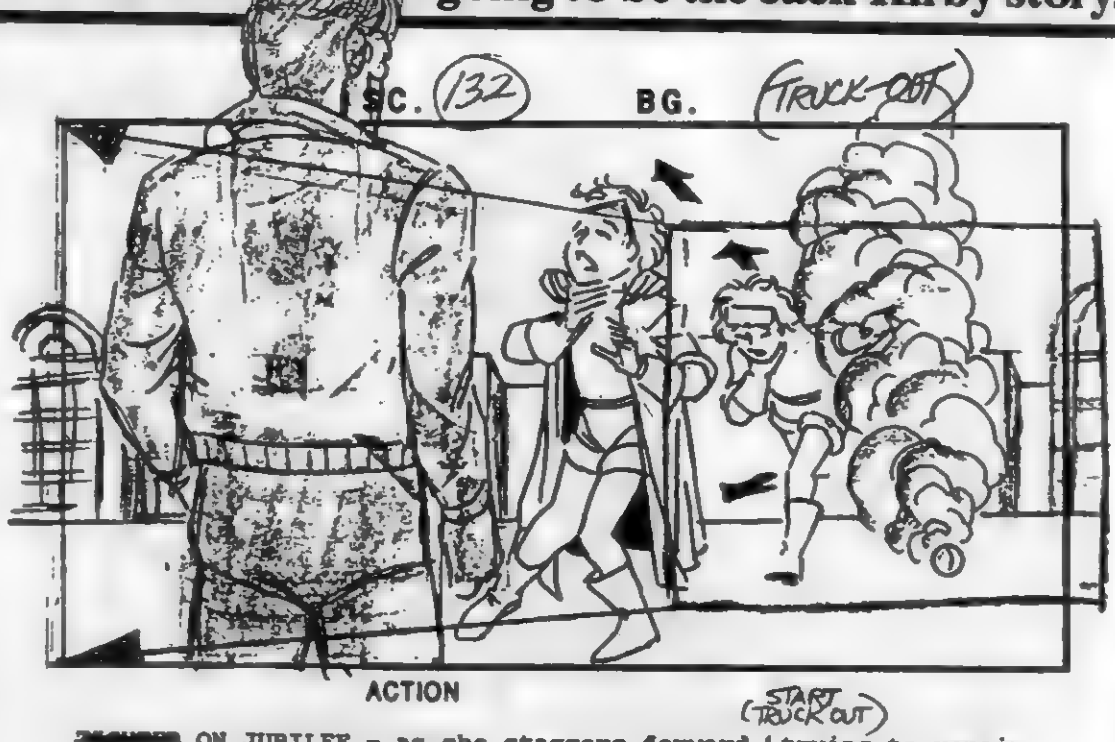
WILL: They were all fun. I started out doing storyboards and I produced the music videos for JEM; I worked on the original X-MEN pilot; GI JOE commercials; the first two seasons of GHOST BUSTERS; and CAPTAIN PLANET. I'm also working on the CONAN cartoon.

CHARLES: *I'll have to admit that I've not heard about the CONAN cartoon.*

WILL: Being a kid's show we obviously won't be getting into the raping, looting and pillaging. *(More laughter.)* **Russ Heath** is the art director and Russ and I did most of the models for the show.

CHARLES: *Talking television, how do you feel about the new Bob Newhart show in which he plays a comic-book*

"The Newhar[illegible]'s going to be the Jack Kirby story."


SC. 132
BG. TRUCK OUT
ACTION
START TRUCK OUT
[illegible] ON JUBILEE - as she staggers forward trying to remain conscious -- and finds her way blocked by a man. She looks up.

artist?

WILL: I think it's fascinating. **Mark Evanier** is, of course, involved with the project and, at one time, we discussed the possibility of me being the comic-book artist

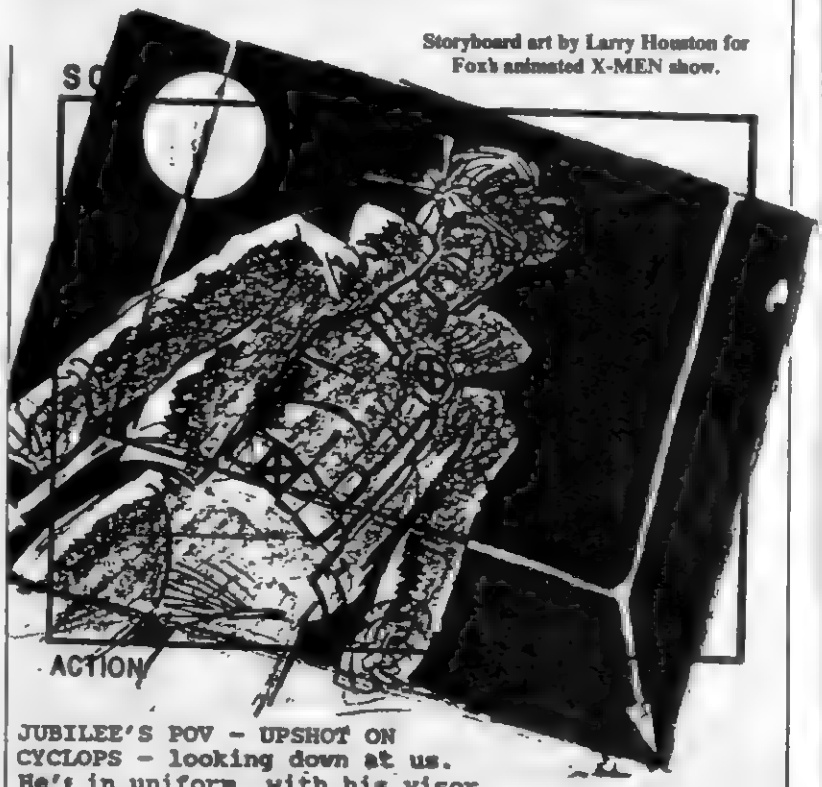
CHARLES: *I believe that job went to Paul Power?*

WILL: Right, and Mark is writing it. I think the program is a great premise. My understanding of it is that it's going to be the **Jack Kirby** story.

CHARLES: *That's interesting; I've not heard that! Getting back to the X-MEN series, a lot of readers are familiar with the time frames and constraints of producing a comic book; if the X-MEN series is due out in mid-October, where does that put it production-wise at this point?*

WILL: In an animated production you start with a script. About a week after the scripts are turned in the model sheets are finished and then you hand it out for storyboards. At this point we just sent out the fifth storyboard for client comment. In terms of pre-production, the show's probably around a quarter of the way done. The nice thing about working with Fox is that the show was a late pick-up and Barbara gave us a few extra weeks because she wants to see it done right.

Storyboard art by Larry Houston for Fox's animated X-MEN show.



"I wanted to work on the X-MEN animated series."

A long-time comics fan, Larry Houston began his animation career with Filmation in 1979 and was involved with such animated features as TARZAN and FLASH GORDON. Shortly after the formation of Marvel Productions, in 1980, Larry joined the staff and worked on basically all of their adventure animation shows; DUNGEONS AND DRAGONS, SPIDER-MAN AND HIS AMAZING FRIENDS, INHUMANOIDS, and SOLARMAN, to name but a few.

Larry left Marvel Productions to join GRAZ Entertainment and is currently the line producer for the X-MEN animated series premiering on Fox this fall. Now, let's join Larry for a fascinating discussion of the ins and outs of producing an animated series as complex as the X-MEN . . .

LARRY HOUSTON

VITAL STATISTICS

Name: Larry Houston

Born: 26 October, 1953 — Los Angeles

Education: Dorsey High School, Control Data Institute (computer education)

Credits: Filmation Studios: Storyboards on LONE RANGER, TARZAN FLASH GORDON, ZORRO, BLACKSTAR. Allison Manufacturing: GI JOE T-shirt artwork. Eclipse Comics: Pencil artist for DNAGENTS Tank story, DNAGENT story, promo art inker on DNAGENTS cover art. DC Comics: Inker on CAPTAIN CARROT, ALL-STAR COMICS. Mattel Toys: MASTERS OF THE UNIVERSE comic books with toys, Marvel Super Heroes Linticular comic art for toys. Ruby and Spears Productions: Storyboards on PUPPY'S NEW ADVENTURE, MR. T, THUNDARR, TURBO TEEN, SPACE ACE, SUPERMAN. DIC Enterprises: Storyboard Supervisor on Hasbro's C.O.P.S. syndicated series. Hanna-Barbera: Storyboards on JONNY QUEST, SHIRT TALES, GALTAR, SUPER POWERS SHOW, SUPER FRIENDS, PAC-MAN. Calico Productions: Storyboards on DENVER, THE LAST DINOSAUR. TMS Entertainment: Storyboards for BIONIC SIX, MIGHTY ORBOTS, VISIONARIES. Landmark Productions: Live-action storyboards on CAPTAIN POWER. Marvel Productions: Line producer, storyboard artist, and a writer of GI JOE series; Storyboard/designer of GI JOE movie title, GI JOE movie storyboards (theatrical); co-producer, writer, designer of CAPTAIN AMERICA pilot; co-producer, co-director, co-writer and storyboard artist of X-MEN pilot; storyboards for JEM and JEM songs; storyboards for GI JOE commercials, TRANSFORMER commercials; SOLARMAN, SPIDER-MAN, HULK, DUNGEONS AND DRAGONS, INHUMANOIDS, BIG FOOT, ROBOTIX, DEFENDERS OF THE EARTH. Disney TV production: TALE SPIN storyboard. DIC Enterprises: Producer/director of KARATE KID, producer/director of CAPTAIN PLANET (1 Emmy nomination). Turner/Hanna-Barbera: JONNY QUEST movie storyboards. Warner Bros. Television: BATMAN storyboards. Marvel Productions: Marvel producer of Arsenio Hall's CLEVELAND CITY LIMITS pilot, supervising producer of Hasbro/Sunbow's BUCKY O'HARE, producer of NBC's KID 'N' PLAY GRAZ Entertainment: Producer of X-MEN TV series.

Hobbies: Comics and computers

X-MEN and all artwork accompanying this interview copyright ©1992 Marvel Entertainment Group

"We're not making changes just to make changes

All art from Larry's storyboards for X-MEN show #1.

CHARLES NOVINSKIE: *How did GRAZ Entertainment come about?*

LARRY HOUSTON: What happened there was that the head of production for Marvel, **Jim Graziano,** left Marvel and started his own studio, GRAZ Entertainment. GRAZ had gained the rights to do the animated CONAN series along with MY LITTLE PONY. There was also the very likely possibility that GRAZ was going to be involved with the X-MEN series. I wanted nothing more than the chance to work on the X-MEN series, so when I heard that GRAZ was going to be involved I took a chance and made the move.

CHARLES: *I take it from your comments that you're a big comics fan?*

LARRY: Definitely. I started collecting way back when, back in the '60s when **Stan Lee** and **Jack Kirby** were producing the FANTASTIC FOUR. One of the earlier issues I remember was the Silver Surfer first appearing in the FANTASTIC FOUR. I've been reading and collecting ever since. I mostly buy books to read writers that entertain me and for the phenomenal artwork in the books. I also buy a lot of the X-MEN books, both because I enjoy the books and because I have to know what's going on with the X-MEN to produce the series.

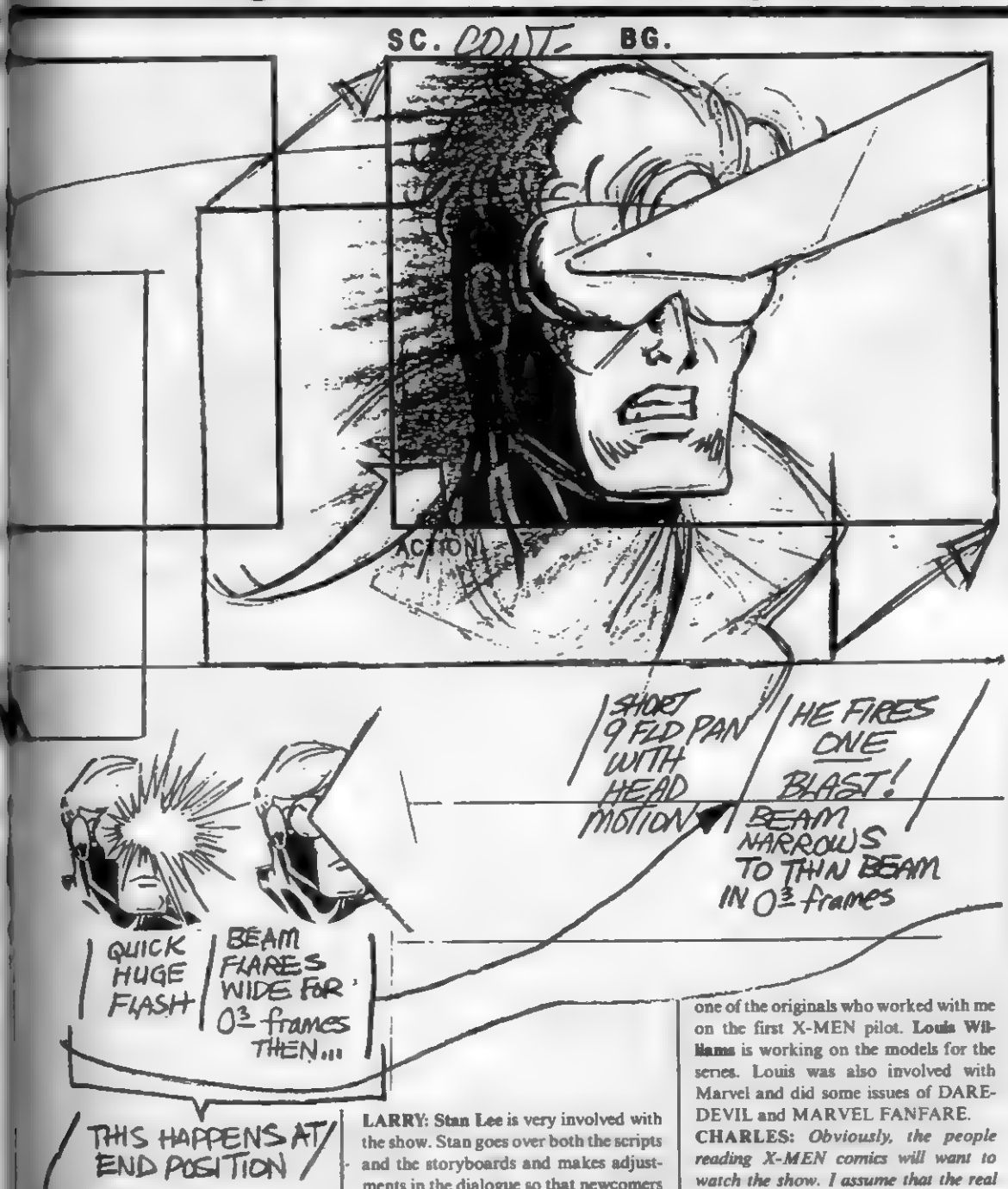
CHARLES: *As closely as you are following the comic plot-lines, I would guess that you have to keep in close touch with the writers or editors.*

LARRY: I keep in constant contact with the editor of the X-MEN books, **Bob Harras.** Bob has been involved with all of the scripts, the voices, and the continuity. We're not making any arbitrary changes just to make changes. We're sticking as close to the continuity as we can and that requires constant contact with people such as **Bob Harras.** We can't do the series verbatim, because you can't include thirty years of history in a series of half-hour shows. When the Sentinels first appear they take on the X-Men. This is, as far as the show is concerned, the first time that the general public sees evidence that there are not only mutants but that there are organized groups of mutants in the form of the X-Men. From that point on, in the television continuity, individual characters are introduced.

CHARLES: *Will Meugniot mentioned the core group of characters. Who else will be featured in the show?*

LARRY: We'll be introducing Colossus in one episode. We'll also be introducing Bishop and the Juggernaut. Wolverine will be the focus of one of the episodes where we will be able to concentrate on character development. There are so

We're sticking as close to the continuity as we can."


SC. CONT- BG.
ACTION
SHORT 9 FLD PAN WITH HEAD MOTION
HE FIRES ONE BLAST!
BEAM NARROWS TO THIN BEAM IN 0³ frames
QUICK HUGE FLASH
BEAM FLARES WIDE FOR 0³ frames THEN...
THIS HAPPENS AT END POSITION

many X-Men out there that we decided it would be best to work on developing a specific core group. The further we get along in the show the more characters we'll be able to introduce. If you look at the core group of characters we have a nice balance of three women and three men.

CHARLES: *You mention the involvement of Bob Harras. How much is Stan Lee involved?*

LARRY: Stan Lee is very involved with the show. Stan goes over both the scripts and the storyboards and makes adjustments in the dialogue so that newcomers can follow the series. Stan fixed the dialogue and such so that — even if you haven't followed the history of the X-Men through their comic adventures — you can still follow the show.

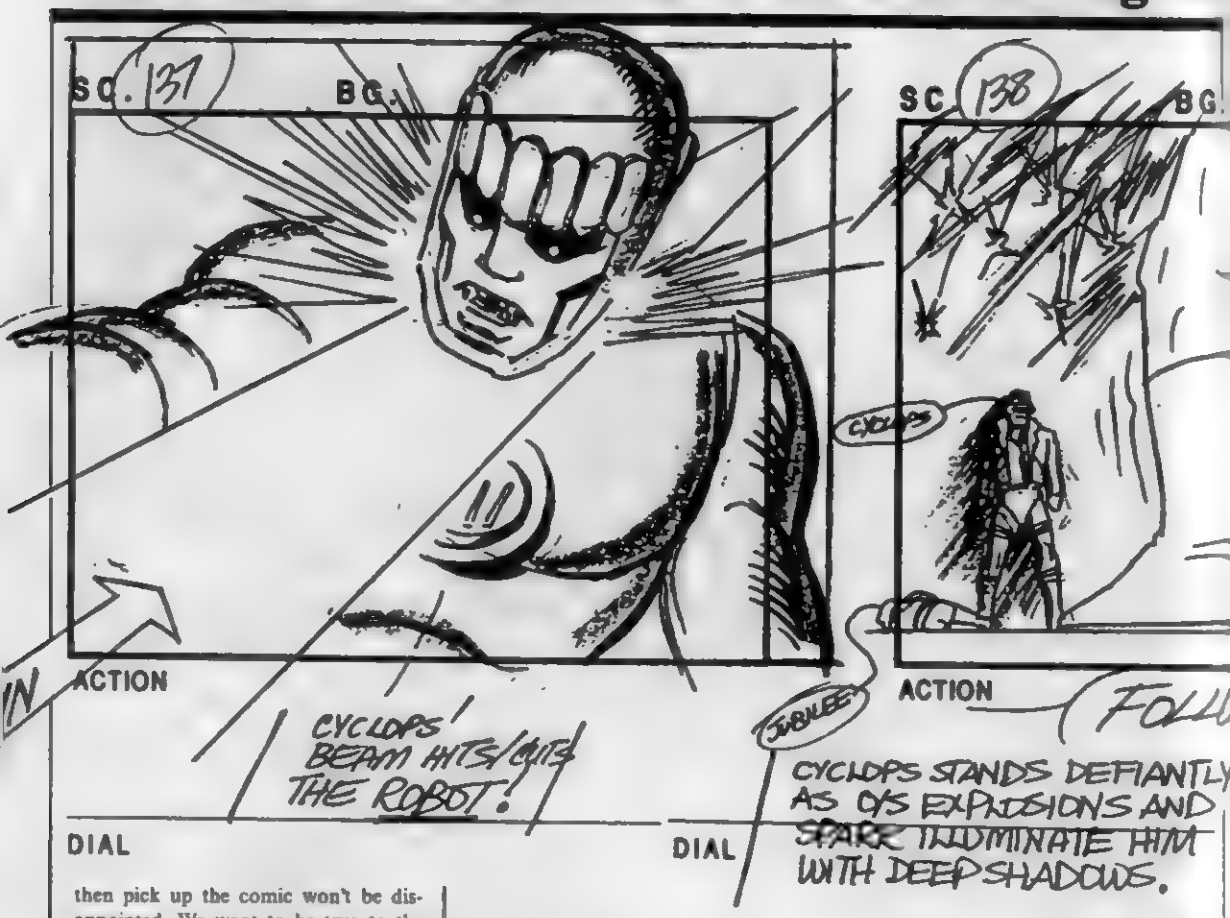
CHARLES: *Can you name some of the other creative talent involved in the series?*

LARRY: Sure, the person doing all of the model sheets is **Rick Hoberg.** He should be familiar to comic fans. Rick was also one of the originals who worked with me on the first X-MEN pilot. **Louis Williams** is working on the models for the series. Louis was also involved with Marvel and did some issues of DAREDEVIL and MARVEL FANFARE.

CHARLES: *Obviously, the people reading X-MEN comics will want to watch the show. I assume that the real success of the show will be drawing in new viewers and familiarizing them with the X-MEN. In turn, the show should create a whole new group of comic readers.*

LARRY: That's one of the goals of the series; to reach a larger audience. Given the print success of the X-MEN comic book, it's still a very small part of the total population. By staying true to the comic, people who watch the show and

"With this X-MEN show we're doing a



then pick up the comic won't be disappointed. We want to be true to the characterizations and dialogue of the characters. There was a movie version of THE PUNISHER in which they arbitrarily took it upon themselves to take out all of the things that made him the Punisher.

CHARLES: *Like the skull on his chest?*

LARRY: Exactly, and after they made all of the changes, one had to wonder why they did a film on the Punisher — when the final product wasn't the Punisher. You have to be faithful to the audience that is already familiar with the character and is expecting to see that character.

CHARLES: *You also worked on the first X-MEN pilot. How does this differ?*

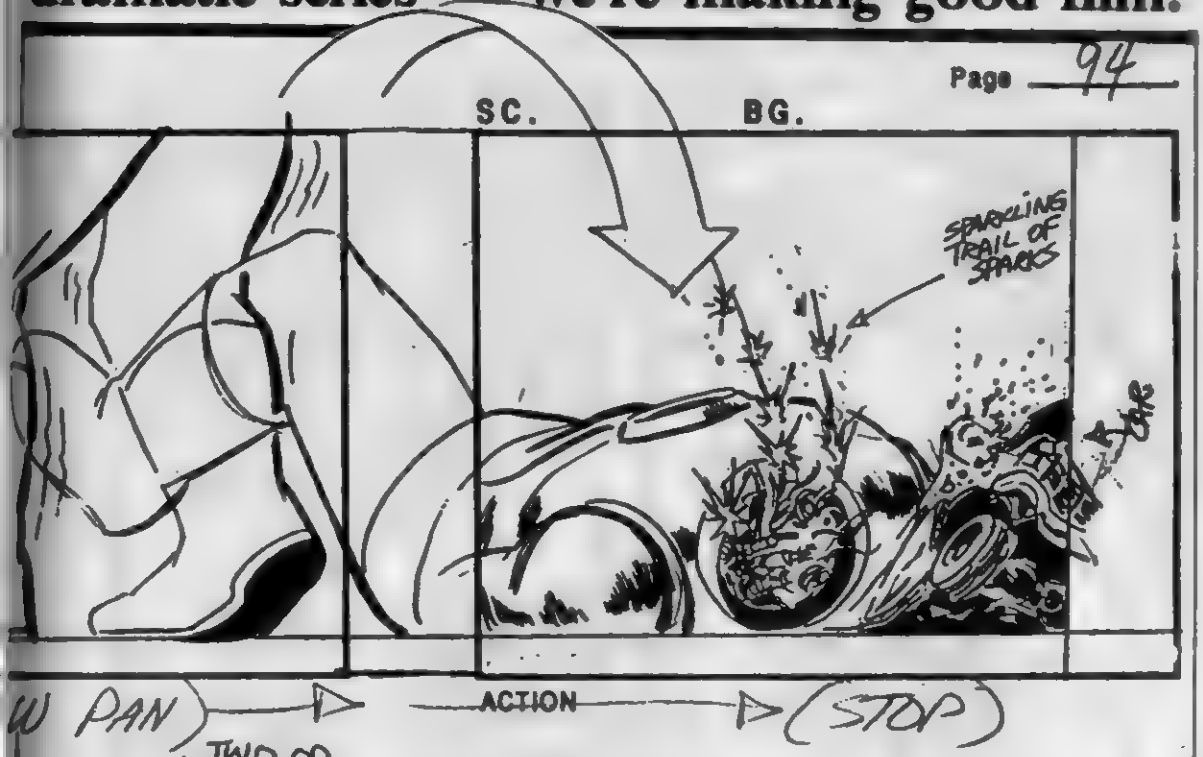
LARRY: This one has a lot more going for it. With the first pilot our instructions were a lot different. The pilot was just that, a pilot. It was more of a promo trying to get people interested in the series so that we could do thirteen episodes. With the promo, we couldn't put in the dramatic resonance that we wanted to, because we were serving a different agenda. With this series we're doing a dramatic series — we're making good film. Having the comic-book continuity to draw upon is a bonus for the series. We have a lot of motivations and traits already developed in the comics which we can expand upon.

CHARLES: *Obviously, there are a lot of different aspects to putting together an animated feature and one of those is the voice overs.*

LARRY: There are quite a few different companies involved in the overall process. The voices are being done by a Canadian group, Sound Interchange. I went to Canada to supervise the recording and it was really fun meeting these people. The guy that does the Beast is this nice guy — but he's really huge, just like the Beast, and the voice that comes out of him is just so natural. The voices are fabulous! If you could just listen to the tapes of the show, the voices separate; if you had no video but just the sound track, you could still easily identify all of the characters by voice. That voice separation is exactly what you want since, to be quite honest, if you look at the drawings, it's not that easy to differentiate the characters — because everyone is huge, with muscular bodies. They have a lot of good talent in Canada. The lady that's doing the voice of Jubilee is the same lady that does the voice for the girl in BEETLEJUICE.

CHARLES: *You scared me for a second. I thought you were going to say it was the lady that does the voice for Marge on THE SIMPSONS.* (Laughter.)

dramatic series — we're making good film."



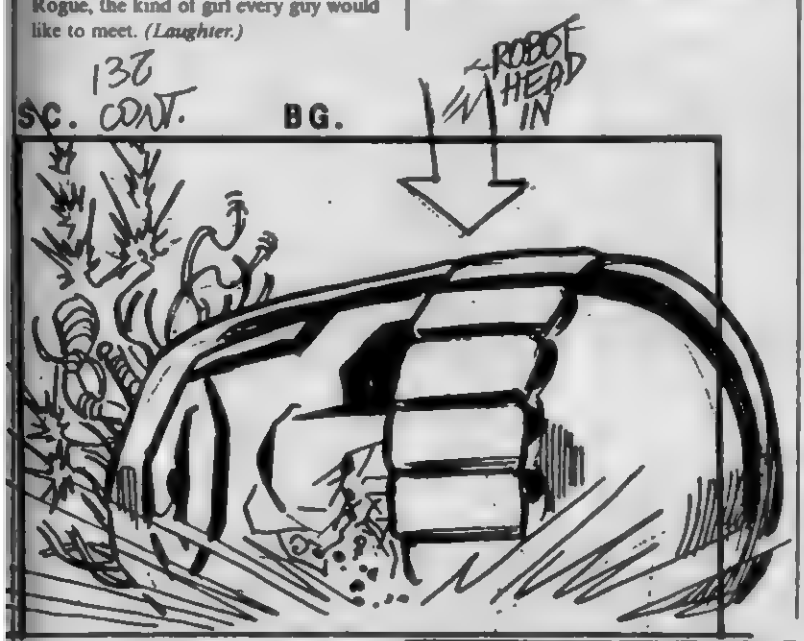
LARRY: No, she's definitely out! The girl that does Rogue does a very sexy Rogue and, as it turns out, uses her natural voice. She even looks a little like Rogue, the kind of girl every guy would like to meet. *(Laughter.)*

CHARLES: *What about Gambit? He has ties to New Orleans and has that Cajun sort of voice.*

LARRY: We tried to give them all their own distinct voices. What we found is that exaggerating a Cajun accent would hinder the performance. There's a hint of it — but it's not overdone. Once again, we consulted people like **Bob Harras** and we all decided to tone down Gambit's speech patterns.

CHARLES: *Will there be any computer-generated animation as opposed to the cel animation?*

LARRY: We've talked about computer animation for the Blackbird jet and holographic imagery for the War Room. We'll also see the Danger Room — which will be going back to the original intent of having characters dodge obstacles and things like that to hone their skills. I've always looked at the Holodeck on STAR TREK: THE NEXT GENERATION as their Danger Room. What we want to do is give fans the best of the best from the comic. We'll be having quite a few cameos of characters from the book, so that readers of the book will be able to say, "Hey, I recognize that character!" Each episode will stand on its own, but we will also have ongoing subplots so that each episode will be relevant to subsequent stories. The series should appeal to a wide group of viewers, whether or not they read comics.



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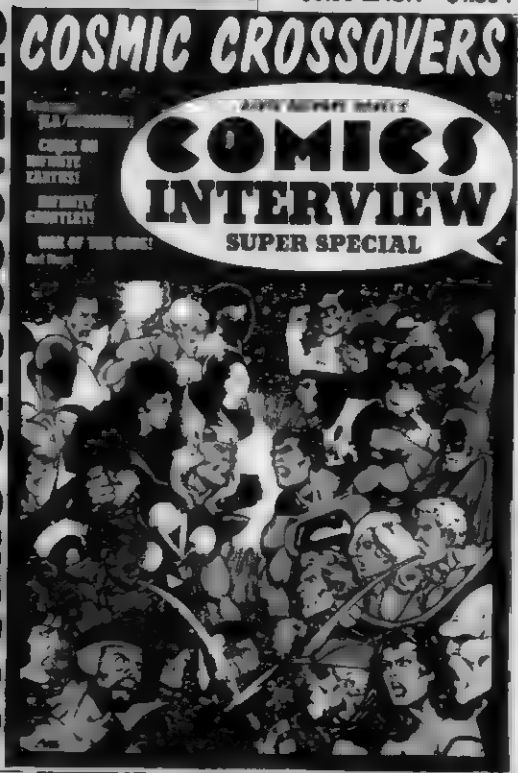

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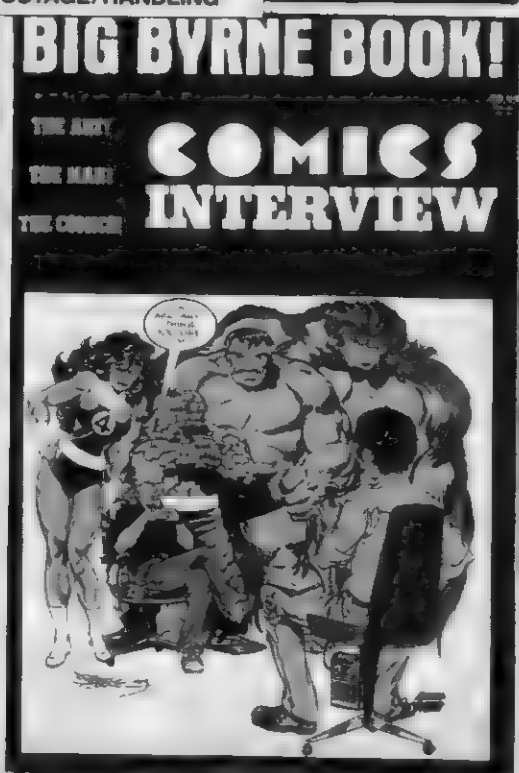

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"It's a full-time job doing new pages instead of reprints."

PAUL NEARY

Heavily contending for the title of one of the busiest prominent persons on the British comics scene, Paul Neary is very difficult to make an appointment with, no matter how eager he is to meet fans and/or other professionals' demands or enquiries

This conversation took place one pleasant London morning in the Arundel House offices of Marvel UK, but it was a long time in the preparation. Simply said, it was virtually impossible to adjust the schedules of Mr. Neary and Ye Humble Scribe, since both of us have full-time engagements. Luckily, after many missed opportunities and passing months, the Great Eastern Comicbook Convention took place in London, Mr. Neary had the good will to stick into his agenda the talk for the readers of CI and — here it is.

This true creative person in the field of sequential art is in his early forties, and already has a very rich and exciting biography, but it doesn't appear that it seems so for him, for his realistic attitude is rooted in pure professionalism — not in the tendentious modesty characteristic of some "stars". . .

BOJAN M. DJUKIC: *So,how does it feel to be editor-in-chief of Marvel UK?*

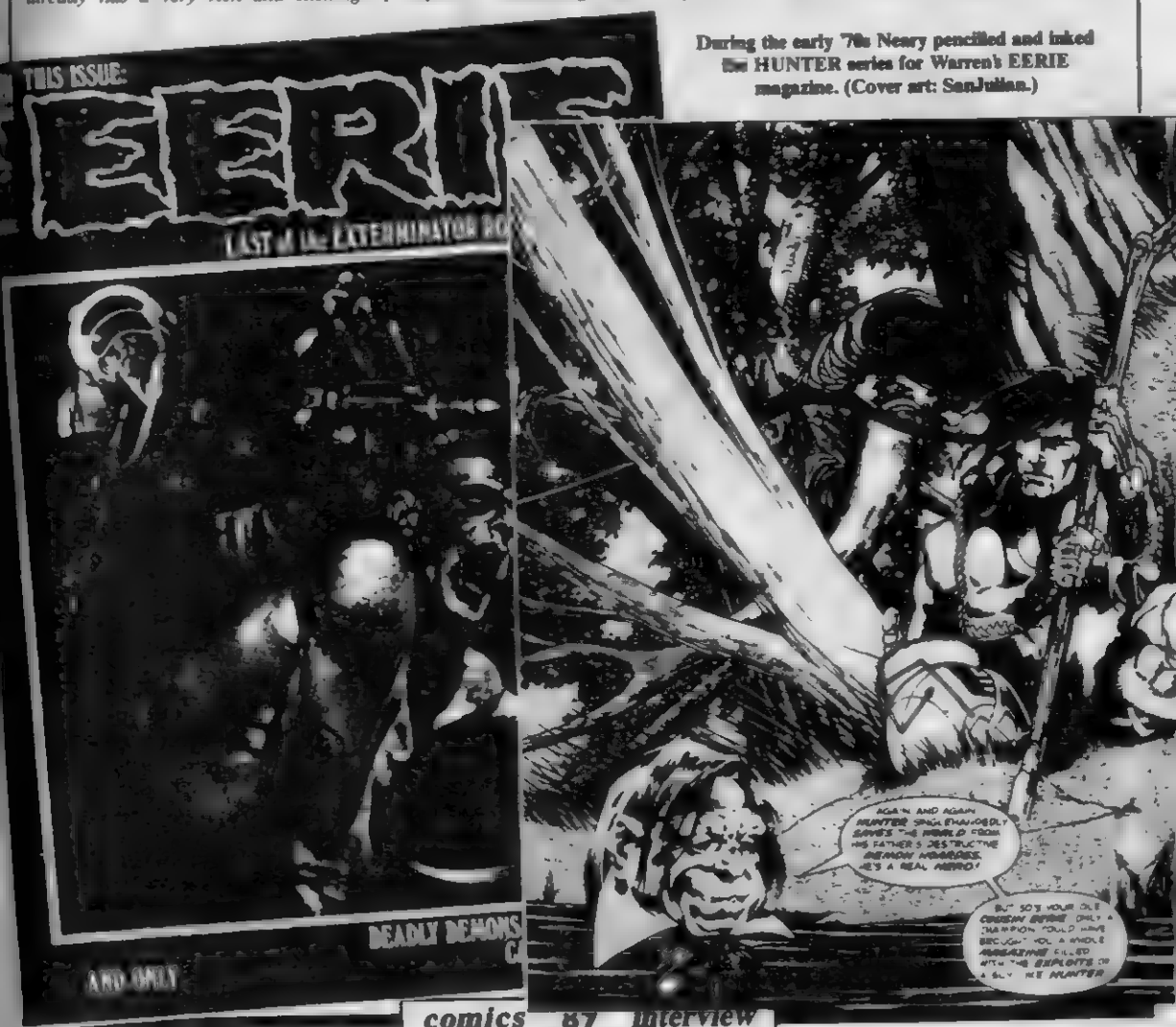
PAUL NEARY: Busy. It's a full-time job involving the organization of various things, producing new pages instead of being predominantly reprint.

BOJAN: *Considering that one of your predecessors later went into the maybe greener pastures of pop-music*, do you consider your eventual future career in a group named "Comic Shop Guys"?*

*(*This moderately successful attempt for making an in-joke was aimed at the current career of Marvel UK editor from the '70s, Neil Tennant — leader of the British pop group Pet Shop Boys.)*

PAUL: No. *(Laughter.)*

BOJAN: *With Barry Windsor-Smith at the end of the '60s, I suppose you came a*


THIS ISSUE:
EERIE
LAST OF THE EXTERMINATOR BOTS
DEADLY DEMONS
AND ONLY
AGAIN AND AGAIN HUNTER SINGLEHANDEDLY SAVES THE WORLD FROM HIS FATHER'S DESTRUCTIVE DEMONIC NONSENSE. HE'S A REAL HERO!
BUT SO'S YOUR OLD COUSIN BERNIE. ONLY A THUNDERCATS COULD HAVE BEEN LOST IN A WHOLE MAGAZINE FILLED WITH THE EXPLOITS OF A REAL HE MANTER

During the early '70s Neary pencilled and inked the HUNTER series for Warren's EERIE magazine. (Cover art: SanJulian.)

"Alan Davis turned up with work. It looked good and

long time before the tidal wave of British writers and artists which crossed over to America . .

PAUL: Yes . . . Barry Smith and also Steve Parkhouse were the British creators who first made the trip across. They were a little older than me, and beat me to it. And also George Barr was working in the American industry, for Warren Comics. There were a few of us around, but the main "exodus" happened later on.

BOJAN: *But you crossed the Atlantic first, with your work for Marvel?*

PAUL: No, it was Warren Comics. While I was at university I wrote and drew a three-page story which got published in MONSTER TIMES, a short-lived newspaper at the end of the '60s. I must have been around 19 then . . . A Canadian contact called John Mansfield was a big-name fan at the time and took the artwork to Warren, who was producing comics like CREEPY, EERIE and VAMPIRELLA . . . and also BLAZING COMBAT . . . gorgeous black-and-white magazines that were well printed and published in a slightly larger format than mainstream comics. At the time they were just about to have a lot of European people begin to work for them . . .

BOJAN: *The Spanish guys?*

PAUL: Yes, SELECCIONES ILLUSTRADAS, **José Toutain's** people. They were just beginning to work for Warren. I didn't know about it when I took my stuff across but I saw it in the office before it was actually printed. There was **Esteban Maroto, José Ortiz . . .**

BOJAN: *Gonzalo Mayo?*

PAUL: Yes, **Mayo . . .** also **Luis Garcia, Jose Gonzales . . .** a lot of people . . .

BOJAN: *SanJulian on covers . . .*

PAUL: And **Fernando Fernandez** was

Here's another series Paul drew for Warren's EERIE.

EXTERMINATOR ONE:
IT'S FEBRUARY, 2014. THIS IS NEW YORK CITY. AND I'M PETER ORWELL...OR AT LEAST I USED TO BE BEFORE THEY TOOK AWAY MY BODY AND WRAPPED MY BRAIN IN A TIN CAN. NOW I'M A MACHINE, BUILT FOR ONLY ONE PURPOSE . TO KILL! FOR MY OWN SANITY, I HAVE TO KEEP REMINDING MYSELF OF THESE THINGS OVER AND OVER.
I'M A PUPPET, CONTROLLED BY A COMPUTER THAT WINDS ME UP...
...PULLS MY STRINGS...
...AND MAKES ME MOVE!
YEAH...THE COMPUTER! GEORGE! MY CONSTANT COMPANION. MY ALTER-EGO. HIS BODY'S A BLOCK AND HALF LONG, AND A HUNDRED AND FIFTY MILES AWAY.
BUT HIS "MIND" IS STUCK RIGHT IN HERE WITH ME. HE MOVES MY LEGS, WORKS MY ARMS ...AND TONIGHT, HE'LL MAKE ME KILL!
AND THERE'S NOT A DAMN THING I CAN DO ABOUT IT! IT'S LIKE A NIGHTMARE...BUT IT'S REAL...AND IT'S HAPPENING TO ME!

Author: **BILL DuBAY** Illustrator **PAUL NEARY**

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I couldn't understand why he wasn't already published."

there . . .

BOJAN: *So again, you came into the "Warren — Phase Two" when they definitely had to abandon Jim Warren's attempts to revive the EC image and style of comics.*

PAUL: I think that's true. The "old guard" had quit almost together for contractual reasons. There was some kind of a wrangle there after **Rocco Mastroserio's** death, and pretty soon they left . . . and **Bill DuBay** came across from the West Coast to pick up the editorial reins. It was during that time that the whole changeover went from being as you said "EC Revisited" to being more of a European showcase, I guess.

BOJAN: *Yes, later on — I remember — they even introduced some French people . . .*

PAUL: **Paul Gillon,** yes. He was good. Great stuff . . . but that was just reprint, though. The earlier stuff they've actually written in America and had it drawn by the Spanish artists. I think **Louise Jones** took over from **Bill DuBay** and moved away from this, and began to employ more U.S. people. This was in the few years before she went to Marvel . . .

BOJAN: *And became Louise Simonson.*

PAUL: Yes.

BOJAN: *One thing that I stumbled upon reading a recent issue of COMICS INTERNATIONAL (a British trade newspaper independently created and edited by Derek "Dez" Skinn, with the recent addition of color and national distribution) was about you . . . I'm interested about your co-operation with penciler Alan Davis before his pencils went into "the perfect marriage" with the inks of Mark Farmer. You were associated on many occasions with Mr. Davis, right?*

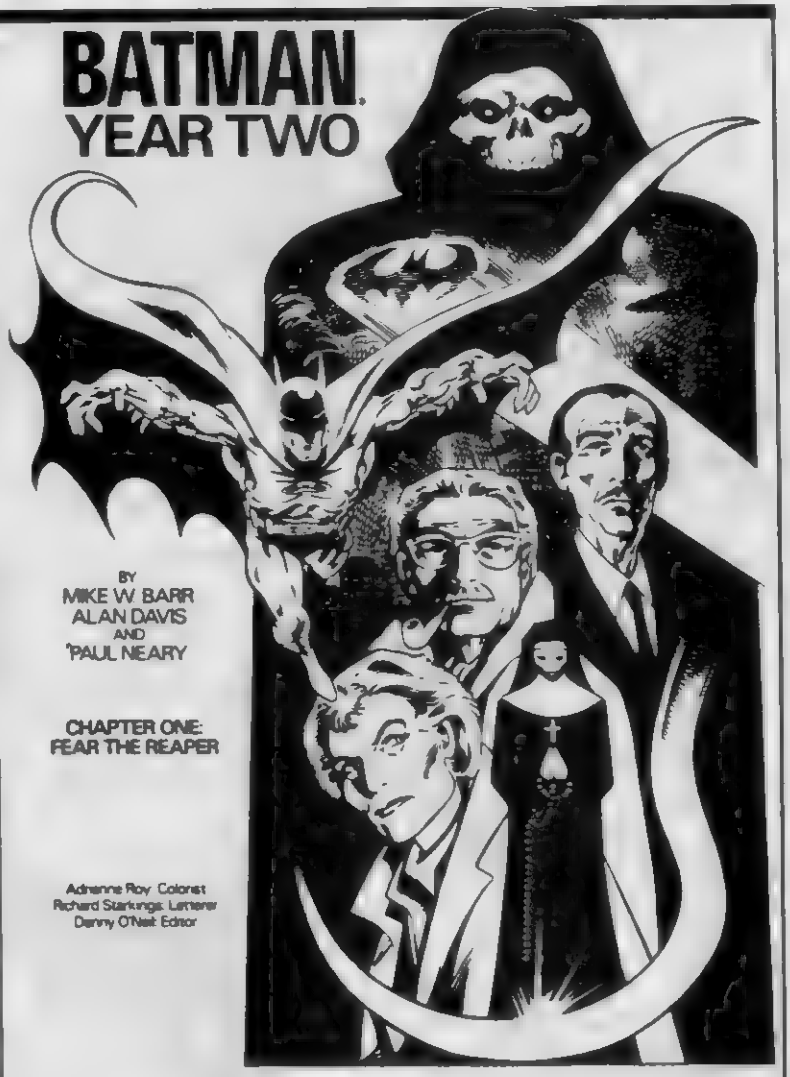
PAUL: Yes. I had a brief stint in Marvel UK before I came here this time. It must have been about 12 years ago . . . it was from '79 to '81. I was working as an art director and eventually became editor-in-chief just for about 18 months. But I was there for a while and during that time . . .

BOJAN: *Before this tenure?*

PAUL: Yes, as I said it was at the end of the '70s, from 1979 to 1981. So it's a little over ten years ago. Even when I got there we had good people working in Marvel UK. **Dez Skinn** was collecting together a pool of talent and he was attempting to put together new comics, principally to do with Spider-Man and Hulk . . .

BOJAN: *Was it a British-produced HULK?*

PAUL: Yes . . .



Neary inks Alan Davis' pencils (DETECTIVE COMICS #575).

BOJAN: *It's important now to stress the fact — not a reprint, but domestically produced comics, unlike AVENGERS, SPIDER-MAN . . .*

PAUL: That's right. Dez was making new pages in Britain. He had **David Lloyd** working on NIGHTRAVEN, **Dave Gibbons** was working on DR. WHO, **Steve Dillon** was just beginning (he was 16 or something). I joined and . . . right after Dez left and I became editor-in-chief, **Alan Davis** turned up with some work. It looked very good and I couldn't understand why he wasn't already published. He wasn't that interested in doing superhero work, but I wanted to bring back CAPTAIN BRITAIN. So I asked him to re-design the costume. I wrote a few plots which brought Captain Britain from where he was left in the last series written by **Steve Parkhouse.** He'd been left dropping through the mists of time. I wrote a few plots and I asked **Dave Thorpe** . . . who was working in-house as an editor at the time to script it. We worked like this on the first three episodes; after that I left and **Bernie Jaye** took over as editor on the strip and put **Alan Moore** on the writing chores.

BOJAN: *So it was the nucleus of the talent which literally spread around the world?*

PAUL: Yes, I had already given **Alan Moore** his first job in a back-up strip in DR. WHO WEEKLY. **Steve Moore** who was . . . they have the same name, but are not related . . . Steve was writing DR. WHO for us and he recommended Alan for the job. When **Dez Skinn** moved to

"Marvel UK was integral in bringing together talent which

the WARRIOR magazine he began to employ some of the people that worked for Mavel. I recommended **Alan Davis** to him, he already knew **Steve Dillon** and **Alan Moore,** who began to work on Marvel Man. WARRIOR and Marvel used many of the same creators at the time.

BOJAN: *Like a small outpost?*

PAUL: Yes . . . except that WARRIOR was more experimental; also creators kept copyright on their characters. Dez was always interested in doing new stuff and he had a lot of enthusiasm. It was a shame when WARRIOR went down, but the movement continues. Al in a way carried on what was happening in WARRIOR. At the very least, Marvel UK was very integral in bringing together a lot of talent which, as you said, dispersed across the world, and it's happening again in a similar way now. Twelve years later we have people working here that are British and not widely published before, so it seems like there are always good people around.

BOJAN: *You have changed your style very often. Comparing your work for Marvel and Warren, do you have your personal style and were you primarily penciller, inker, or both?*

PAUL: Like most people that worked with Warren I used to be both. They didn't really have a "penciller/inker" system . . .

BOJAN: . . . *but you had, for example, Carmine Infantino inked by Alex Nino!*

PAUL: That was later on, after I had left. **Bill DuBay** was a personal friend of Infantino and he brought him in. Probably Carmine didn't want to ink his own work. Carmine was from DC Comics and there they always had a penciller/inker system. I'm not quite sure how it worked, but I like them both separately and their styles really did go together well . . .

BOJAN: *It was really beautiful to behold. Now considering, for example, your version of Captain America and your work on some horror titles for Warren, I can see a drastic change which is not diminishing the quality of your work. I'm just interested in why you did it?*

PAUL: Well . . .

BOJAN: . . . *Is it some kind of*

Paul's pencils inked by the one and only Joe Sinnott (CAPTAIN AMERICA #319).

HELLO, CAPTAIN! THIS IS AN UNEXPECTED HONOR.
HOPE YOU DON'T MIND MY APPREHENDING THIS MAN.
NOT AT ALL. THAT CREEP'S PUT OVER TEN LOCAL BLUES IN THE HOSPITAL.
SAY, BLACKLASH--
--YOU USED TO BE A WELL-CONNECTED HITMAN. WHAT'S WITH THESE SMALL-TIME JEWELRY HEISTS?
I DON'T GIVE A HANG ABOUT MY REP ANYMORE. I'LL BE DEAD SOON ANYWAY. ALL I'M TRYING TO DO IS GET ENOUGH BREAD TOGETHER TO SUPPORT MY MOM AFTER I'M GONE.
WHAT DO YOU MEAN YOU'LL BE DEAD SOON?
COME ON, MAN--YOU MUST KNOW THERE'S A MAD KILLER ON THE LOOSE, GUNNING DOWN HIGH PROFILE COSTUMED CRIMINALS LIKE ME. I'M NOT ONE TO SCARE EASY--
--BUT WHEN HE OFFED MY OLD BUDDY THE MELTER*--THAT'S WHEN I KNEW NOT EVEN I WAS SAFE!
*IN AVENGERS # 263.

has dispersed across the world, and it's happening again."

I'VE NEVER SEEN ANY PLACE LIKE THIS...
AND I'M GLAD!
HOW 'BOUT A HUG, LONGSHOT.
ALISON, WHAT THIS PLACE MAKES ME FEEL...
RIGHT NOW, I COULD USE A LITTLE TENDER LOVING CARE.
...IS THAT FEAR?
THE HECK WITH IT--
--AH SAY WE FIGHT THE ROAD!

More of Paul's black ink over Alan's graphite (X-MEN ANNUAL #11).

"Moebius/Giraud division" or is it just the assignment which requires the use of various techniques, styles etc.?

PAUL: Depending on the work . . . who I'm working with . . . I've drawn in different ways. To begin with, I became an American comics fan when American comics came to England in the very early '60s. In 1960 I was ten and suddenly everyone in the playground was standing around with these comics! One morning it happened — just like that! One friend of mine was holding what seemed to be a very small comic . . . I'd never seen anything like it, I couldn't believe it! There were no science fiction comics in Britain at the time.

BOJAN: *But what about DAN DARE, by Frank Hampson, Frank Bellamy . . .?*

PAUL: There used to be one to two pages of sf in some anthology comics.

BOJAN: *So there were no magazines devoted entirely to sf?*

PAUL: No, not at all. My brother used to read EAGLE and I read just the front and the back of the cover. That's it, I didn't look at the other stuff. My brother used to pull the covers off them, to pile up DAN DARE and throw the rest away. Basically, there was very little sf stuff around and suddenly when all these SUPERMAN and BATMAN comics turned up it was quite unbelievable. And there it was all at once, right in front of us. I became a real American comics fan at that point and a lot of other people of the same age did too . . . **Dez Skinn** did, I think it's the same with **Brian Bolland** and **Dave Gibbons.** The comics we remember were DC comics because in 1960 there weren't any Marvel ones. The comics that were to become Marvel were still "monster" comics. It was okay, but SPIDER-MAN hadn't happened yet, THE FANTASTIC FOUR hadn't happened yet, so most of the people of my age remember just DC's from their early days.

When I began to work for Warren I was just outgrowing four-color comics. I saw some of Warren's black and white art-type comics, and a lot of artists I recognized were from EC days . . . and also people like **Steve Ditko** were drawing there. I just thought it was terrific! I went to see **Jim Warren** and ended up doing sf stories and an sf/barbarian strip called HUNTER. The work was very influenced by the artists whose work I liked in comics at the time. **Neal Adams** was the real big buzz at the time, and I've always loved the EC people . . . **Frazetta, Williamson, Wally Wood, Krenkel, Crandall** and the others. I liked the work of **Jeff Jones** and there was a strong barbarian movement around at the time. CONAN was big, **Barry Smith** . . .

BOJAN: *A whole sword and sorcery genre in comics was getting off the ground . . .*

Cover pencils and inks by Paul (CAPTAIN AMERICA #383).

"I've refined my style to make it easier for me to draw."

PAUL: Yes, it was very big. So, all that imagery was in my head — **Jeff Jones, Frank Frazetta, Neal Adams** who was appearing also in the color comics . . . there was a mixture of influences there which I was affected by. It was only later on when I left Warren that I began to get distracted from that.

I started to work with **Syd Jordan** on the JEFF HAWKE syndicated daily strip. Syd took a much different view of things; he wasn't really into comics and had a lot of photographic references around him. I began to draw in a slightly different way during the time I was working with him.

I also did some film adaptations for THE HOUSE OF HAMMER. **Dez Skinn** was running that and I did some movie adaptations for Dez and it was a further step toward drawing in a more realistic way — a photographic way. I was interested in that for a while but I stopped working with Syd after about 3-4 years. That led up to the time I spent in Marvel UK for the first time round . . . that must be about '75-'79. When I went to Marvel UK I decided to really forget about using photographic influences that helped me to draw and just sit down and get into mainstream comics. In the early work I did for Marvel UK, I was really finding my feet in cartooning. That was a learning time for me being in Marvel UK; I discovered storytelling and ended up drawing much more quickly. By the time I left Marvel UK to freelance for Marvel US, I was up to three pages a day.

BOJAN: All *pencils and inks?!?*

PAUL: No, they call it "breakdowns", almost finished pencils. While I was doing AGENTS OF S.H.I.E.L.D. and CAPTAIN AMERICA that was the kind of rate I was doing, which for me was odd. I had been doing only a couple of pages per week while I was at Warren. Over the years since I began to draw freely in this way; the standards of what I've been doing have come back up to the standards of what I was doing at Warren. I could sit down and do that HUNTER stuff much more easily now . . . so you're right, I've refined my style in a way that it makes it easier for me to draw.

BOJAN: *These early experiences with comics . . . did they trigger your ambition to become an artist? And how did you start your association with Marvel USA? Did you just go over there or you mailed your pages to them?*

PAUL: Well . . .

BOJAN: . . . *and when did you start professionally — officially speaking?*

PAUL: I've been working for fanzines in Britain . . . for an Irish fanzine called HEROES UNLIMITED, from the time I was sixteen till the time I left university. I was about nineteen when I did the three-page story I told you about. I sent it to the MONSTER TIMES and they printed it. And I just went from there! The work was taken to **Jim Warren** and I was still there all afternoon . . . we had a very lively discussion. He ended up giving me a script, a try-out one, and I pencilled and inked it and it was the beginning of about eight years of working for Warren. It would be interesting to tell a long story how I tried and tried and tried to get my work published but it wasn't like that. After that I just moved around inside the industry.

After Warren I worked for **Syd Jordan** on JEFF HAWKE and then went to work with **Dez Skinn,** whom I've known from the early days in fanzines when I was at college in Yorkshire, not far from where he was living . . . and when he began to work for Marvel I contacted him. I began to work there, I drew HULK with **David Lloyd** and I did some BLACK KNIGHT work with **Steve Parkhouse, John Stokes.** When I left Marvel UK I already knew **Jim Shooter.**

Paul inking over Bryan Hitch (HELL'S ANGEL #4).

"I did SPIDER-MAN, X-FACTOR . . . a lot of annuals."

We used to talk on the phone when I needed pages from him for Marvel in Britain. He knew me, he knew my work on HUNTER from Warren days and he had already suggested that he thought my style might suit CAPTAIN AMERICA.

I asked him if he had any work when I left Marvel UK as an editor. Jim lined me up with **Mark Gruenwald,** who needed a penciller for CAPTAIN AMERICA. That's how I began to draw for Marvel US . . . it was kind of inside the company, really.

All through the '80s I worked for Marvel and I did CAPTAIN AMERICA, KA-ZAR, SPIDER-MAN ANNUALS, X-FACTOR . . . a lot of annuals, and ended up doing the NICK FURY graphic novel series and then I began working with **Alan Davis** as an inker . . . DC BATMAN stuff and EXCALIBUR . . . and we ended up with the WOLVERINE graphic novel which we wrote and drew. That was the last thing I did for Marvel; then I came here.

BOJAN: *Can you take us through the history of Marvel UK and the people who have sat in that chair before you?*

PAUL: Marvel had been pretty well a reprint organization in the very early days of the mid '70s. It was reprinting STAR WARS, that was the monetary input. The STAR WARS films had sparked off a big response in America and it was echoed in England. Marvel UK was small, just an office in Seven Oaks in Kent. They re-processed the pages for black and white magazines with grey tones before publishing them. Dez talked **Stan Lee** into upgrading that reprint organization into something that would produce the British pages. That's really how Marvel UK began in the form that it is now. In terms of people that have done this job, there was Dez; when he left I took over briefly and then I suppose for quite a few years, leading up to the last year, **Jenny O'Connor** was here. So really you can count the people on the fingers of one hand.

BOJAN: *Was there any discontinuity in the existence of Marvel UK as a company during all these years?*

PAUL: No. It's had different emphasis on the kind of publications it put out. When I left I think the real steam went out of sf mainstream comics or heroes. **Jenny O'Connor** and **Robert Sutherland** were much more interested in the "nursery market," like CARE BEARS etc. In the mainstream section from time to time they had limited success.

BOJAN: *Excuse me for this question. I don't want to sound rude, but is there any sense in the existence of Marvel UK when we already have the import of all the Marvel comic books directly from the United States?*

PAUL: Well, the comics that come from America are not distributed on a network that ever allows the big sales. The distributors don't see them as particularly marketable in big numbers — but they are present in some newsagents' shops. The funny thing is that the comics come in a kind of "job lot" which is a collection of various different types of comic titles that they put in newsagents' shops without individually identifying them. So, X-MEN sells roughly the same as anything else in England; there isn't much of an emphasis or a knowledge by the newsagents what the different comics are about. They really don't particularly like the small format. The comics have to be sold cheaply. They can't sell them in big numbers. They sell through the import-shops, but also not in big numbers . . . the kind of numbers they're selling here is a very small fraction of the American print run, and it's an interesting extra for them, but it's really just 5-6 thousand copies of each title.

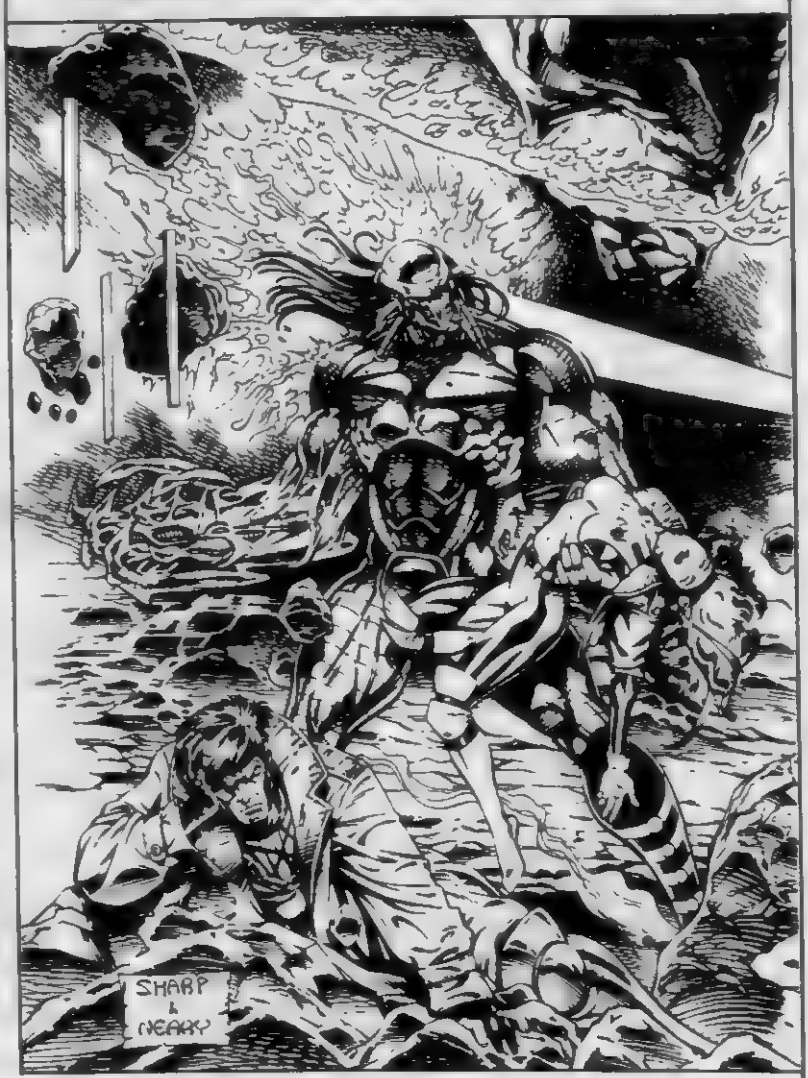
BOJAN: *Is the original production in London intended just for the UK market or including abroad and USA?*

PAUL: Which particular strips?

BOJAN: *The strips you are producing in general in your line of comics.*

PAUL: OVERKILL — the new fortnightly comic that we are bringing out is

Central portion of a 3-piece wraparound/foldout cover for the first issue of the new DEATH'S HEAD ongoing series. Pencils by Liam Sharp with Paul's inks.



"Every plot with American characters I send to America

Paul's cover pencils for HELL'S ANGEL #2 — later inked by Sharp.

to be sure we're not going against their developments."

going to be in two different formats. It's the first time we've done this. We're bringing out five heroes in one comic in Britain, in a slightly larger format than the American monthlies. And in America each one of these heroes has his or her own American comic. So, it's five comics in America and one fortnightly comic in England.

BOJAN: *And how much are you independent in your production from the Marvel N.Y.C. office?*

PAUL: In terms of our own heroes — totally independent.

We have had talks with **Mark Gruenwald** and **Tom DeFalco** about various approaches that they think are pertinent to the American and British markets, and in that advisory capacity talks with them are always interesting. When we use their heroes, every plot that contains the American characters I send to America to be sure that we're not going against their characterization or plot developments.

BOJAN: *So it has to be approved, the use of their properties, right?*

PAUL: I could do it in a less rigorous way than I'm doing it, but I want to do it properly. It's my choice to have a good relationship with our US counterparts. I want them to see the pages, to make sure that we don't do anything they wouldn't like.

BOJAN: *You had and still have other titles outside the Marvel Universe, in your agenda. Can you explain how did it happen, to include TOM & JERRY (till recently), GHOST BUSTERS etc. in your line?*

PAUL: Most comics operations in Britain have two sides to them . . . they have the origination capacity and also they have a licensing side which will buy the rights predominantly to characters that are well known for some reason or another. Actually, there are just two main reasons . . . some classic characters like Rupert the Bear are well-known historically, and other characters like Tom & Jerry are widely seen on television . . . that's a very important part of the deal. So, if the character comes on TV and there's an awareness in the country, it's much easier to sell the comic book under those conditions. And when something is on TV and it's been seen, then comic-book companies like us will pitch in for the rights to make a comic book, really to sell it off the back of the TV program. So, the properties you named were on TV at the time when the first publishing occurred.

BOJAN: *So how come SCOOBY DOO is published here instead of by some other company, maybe one which specializes in adaptations of TV shows in comic-book form?*

PAUL: I think it depends on the availability and who has contacts with whom. Marvel UK paradoxically has a strong tie-in with Warner Bros.

BOJAN: . . . *But Warner owns DC Comics!?!*

PAUL: Warner Bros. owns DC and it's interesting that when we go along to Frankfurt, Germany, to the book fairs, we're there with our American cousins on the same stall and the Warner Bros. people would come to talk to us! In America there's opposition and in Britain we have a different arrangement.

BOJAN: *So that's the reason why you have TINY TOONS and they were intended to be published by DC, as I heard last year during the UKCAC?*

PAUL: Precisely. WB has licensed it to us. We have a very good relationship with their London office.

BOJAN: *It's astonishing, since there was London Editions (now merged with Fleetway into Fleetway Editions) which published DC-related materials . . .*

PAUL: Yes, that's true.

BOJAN: *Do you see a successful future for this company you're the head of — considering the absence from comic shops? The appearances at the news-agents' shops aren't regular and some titles aren't easy to find . . .*

PAUL: One of the things we are doing now at Marvel UK is increasing the quality of our output and explaining to the trade the reasons why they should stock our product. It's a long job. Our new fortnightly comic, OVERKILL, contains fully-originated strips instead of being largely reprint as it might have been in the past. We're trying to re-vamp our output and also associate the Marvel UK name with quality publications.

BOJAN: *Why is the marketing non-*

Character and suit design sketches for HELL'S ANGEL by Paul.

"The purpose of our OVERKILL comic, containing

sufficient in some cases? For instance, NIGHTRAVEN — THE HOUSE OF CARDS by Jamie Delano and David Lloyd is almost impossible to be found and it wasn't advertised enough . . .

PAUL: What you've said is a contradictory statement . . . what you said is you can't get it and it wasn't advertised enough. Those two statements don't fit. NIGHTRAVEN was solicited through the same channels that we solicit all our publications through.

BOJAN: *Yes, I understand but I'm trying to connect the facts that I didn't find the hype, shall we say, the hype behind it which can be seen behind some other titles. In bookstores, comic shops and in newsagents' shops I just couldn't find NIGHTRAVEN and I wanted it desperately . . . I don't expect you to answer me why I can't find it, Mr. Neary; I'm just curious why it isn't more present on the market . . .*

PAUL: Because not many people wanted to order it . . . that's the answer. When some bookshops don't have it and some do have it, it's because there weren't enough orders. Our print run is set by the orders we get beforehand.

What we did with that graphic novel is what we do with all our comics. That is — to advertise to the trade. This is not in generally-available magazines. They're trade magazines and trade release pamphlets which go to the actual warehouses and the distribution companies.

BOJAN: *Like internal newsletters?*

PAUL: Exactly. To Diamond, to Titan Books . . . and what happens is that Marvel has the leaflets which offer up the publications that come out that month in order for orders to be placed. And we use that system for everything we do and we put the NIGHTRAVEN graphic novel through that procedure.

The orders that are made are used to determine the print run. Then we take the comics or graphic novels that we have printed and we send them to the people in numbers that they wanted them, and that process is the same for *everything* we publish.

BOJAN: *Is there a chance for creation of some kind of . . . shall we say . . . "sub-universe" which would be incorporated with the reciprocity in an American university of American Marvel heroes, with limited independence or maybe more close cooperation?*

PAUL: Yeah, that's exactly what's happening. The entire purpose of our new OVERKILL comic, containing new heroes, is that we release them into the Marvel Universe. Incidentally, OVER-

DEATH'S HEAD II #2 cover by Neary & Sharp. Next page: More Warren work.

KILL is a first in British publishing, because all the strips in there relate to each other. They are all happening in the same place and time . . . and one hero can meet another hero in the pages of either strip. The pages of OVERKILL will contain the British Marvel Universe! American editions are also interweaving them with the stories that we've made using the American heroes. There's obviously a complete overlap of the two universes that exist in the world at the same time . . . if Iron Man flies across the Atlantic, he's going to meet Hell's Angel and all the others.

BOJAN: *Are we going to see the rise of the independent serials which would make a whole with the current American serials so the New York HQ would become more integrated with Marvel UK?*

PAUL: The creative overlap and agreement that's occurred since I've been here is, I think, at an all-time high. And we've had one or two American editors expressing their interest in the heroes that we are doing. **Fabian Nicieza** has been very supportive and is interested in MOTORMOUTH because it stars a young teenage character. He was playing around with the idea of using her in NEW WARRIORS and of course I'm in total agreement with that . . . I love it. We need to establish the character of

new heroes, is to release them into the Marvel Universe."

Motormouth fully, before it can be "borrowed" successfully. In a few months when the Americans have seen what our characters are, what they represent, I'd love to see them using them freely in their comic books

BOJAN: *It would be much easier than teaming up Batman and Judge Dredd because of the legal stuff . . .*

PAUL: Yes, that's it. There are no legal complications and in the DEATH'S HEAD II mini-series the last issue was complete mayhem with the American heroes and Death's Head getting involved in some very strange things. *(The magazine is carefully examined during this part of the conversation.)*

BOJAN: *This is a completely British comic, is it?*

PAUL: We have produced DEATH'S HEAD II and we used the Fantastic Four for the second issue and there are some alternative versions of Marvel heroes of the future in issue four. Futuristic versions of a lot of Marvel America characters . . . we're bringing back THE RHINO in a very strange form, we've got futuristic versions of Captain America and a lot of the other American superheroes. It really is good fun . . .

BOJAN: *In a way — "Marvel World of Tomorrow — the British Way"!*

PAUL: Yes! *(Laughter.)*

BOJAN: *And this comic book, by the way, looks very* comic-booky *compared to the dominant British comic-magazine format; do you have an impression that British principle of the magazine-anthology is not functioning in the best way in the context of the American comic-book image?*

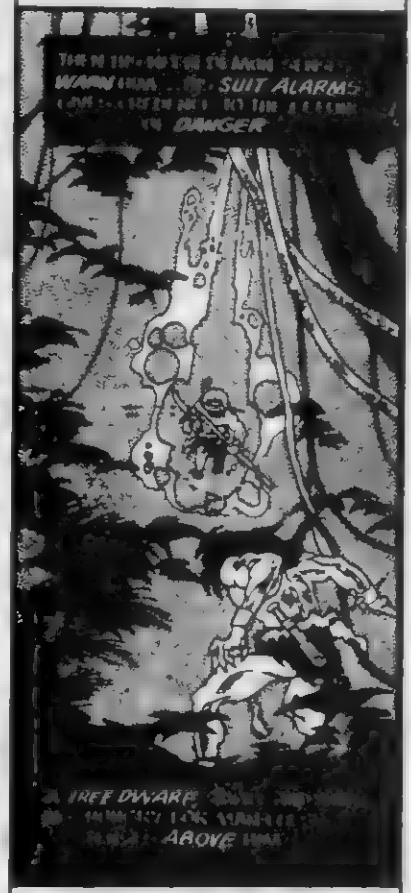
PAUL: From the outside it must look confusing, what we are doing, perhaps even looking as though we're not sure what we are doing. We know what we're doing . . . we're aiming different formats at different segments of the market-place. The feedback that we get from distributors and retailers sometimes tells us different than we think ourselves. We might sometimes make decisions that appear to the comic fan to be crazy, but which are done for reasons that are hidden from the "normal" comic reader. It often has a lot to do with the distribution companies and their methods of selling to the people that they had contacts with in the retail world.

BOJAN: *That is why we have NIGHT-RAVEN — HOUSE OF CARDS in France in album format for their market instead of here . . .*

PAUL: If you put out the book here in Britain and it sells 5,000 copies and then the French publisher comes to you and buys the rights to publish and when he tenders it in his country and it sells five times more, well . . . that's his gain!

BOJAN: *Is there a disproportion in your desire to compromise the editions for younger audiences and "Epic-like" image of graphic novels for more adult and/or sophisticated readers and is it a . . . go to speak, a happy solution?*

PAUL: I think that it is . . . there are two separate markets there and I think that one should not be an off-shoot of the other. If you think about the ages of people that read the comics, when they are 13-14 they read comics far more than when they are 19-20. And kinds of profits that are available to the company in what's become known as the *mainstream* which most of the comics existing in America are — I'm talking about SPIDER-MAN, AVENGERS, CAPTAIN AMERICA . . . the Marvel mainstream — takes care of most of the audiences in terms of the reading numbers. And when you move up towards the older age groups, the numbers come down and the prices go up which is the way it works the best financially. But I think that in our terms we've got to handle the mainstream first. We have to . . . I want to make a thriving mainstream publication in this company before I think about the graphic novels and work for older fans.



BOJAN: *Like this DEATH'S HEAD comic book?*

PAUL: I consider it to be mainstream because its content is suitable for the mainstream readership, and it's also understandable by them. We have considered the way in which we have depicted the nudity and violence. I think it's suitable for the Marvel mainstream in America.

BOJAN: *Now, one question about the technological side of the craft of producing the comic pages; I've noticed on your stand now during the last convention that your artists are drawing more and more with markers and fibre pens — tools which are favored more than the classical tools, like dip-pens and brushes . . . Is there any editorial control over the technology of work and is it similar to the one in the USA? I didn't notice on the American originals that they're abandoning "old-fashioned" drawing equipment . . .*

PAUL: Yes. I know what you're saying. There were always people who've used markers like . . . I think . .

BOJAN: . . . *Gil Kane?*

PAUL: Gil Kane, yes . . . he works with them and . .

BOJAN: . . . *Neal Adams . . . John Byrne . . .*

PAUL: I didn't know that . . .

BOJAN: *Yes, Mr. Adams uses a Pilot fineliner for inking his pencils. Other artists prefer Japanese stuff like Tombows and Pentels. They have invented some stuff which is a fountain brush* (the interviewer shows Mr. Neary a Pentel brush-pen with permanent ink cartridges) *and I know that Mr. Byrne probably uses something like this, see?* (at the same time the interviewer gets a market-tool of Japanese origin which demonstrates a nice thick-and-thin effect of the line, which he leaves with Mr. Neary). *It imitates the brush line with a very flexible rubber tip . . .*

PAUL: That's what **Liam Sharp** uses to ink! This one here, this is the fibre pen with the quality of brush and it holds a very good point . . . I think you have to have a very steady hand because it becomes very fat if you move it even slightly towards the paper. It takes a different discipline. When I was at

"I've moved from work on the page to overseeing projects."

Warren they *tried* to stop me from using a felt-tip because at the time they weren't waterproof. They didn't have the permanent ones! I think that's the danger, the pen in use not being waterproof. So obviously that's something we have to be very careful about here, sending them through the mail . . . but as far as I'm concerned, if it's providing a black, clean line I'm fine with it. I know that **Gary Erskine** uses a wedge-shaped pen which is a felt-tip which looks like the end of a very small screwdriver . . .

BOJAN: *. . . like lettering pens for thick-and-thin effects?*

PAUL: That's right, *italic*, yes . . . it's about three millimeters across the end. He uses a corner of it for thin lines and uses the flat side one way or the other for medium and thick lines. He's very versatile with it. I mean, just looking at the pages I couldn't tell, I'd say he's using the brush. If I find that he's using a match-stick dipped in ink I wouldn't care. If it works like it does, it's good enough for me.

BOJAN: *Of course. Neal Adams' pages inked with his Pilot fineliner are not low in quality compared to his previous pages rendered with pen and brush dipped in India ink . . .*

PAUL: Yes, of course . . . although personally I prefer more of a line thickness variation.

BOJAN: *Okay . . . where's Marvel UK now compared to other British publishing houses?*

PAUL: Because we've been for about the last ten years really concentrating on the younger age group we don't have a cult following. It's not natural for the top-quality freelancers to work for us in the adventure genre. I hope to turn it around. I mean, we have a capability now of putting out a smaller number of very nice comics and I think it's a matter of us just being here for long enough, doing good stuff so that other top creators just aren't that surprised by the fact that Marvel UK has done something which looks nice. I think if we are here long enough, eventually it might sink in that we mean business.

BOJAN: *How do you see your personal future in the comic-book field? In this office or maybe in some other area and/or media? Or maybe outside the comics?!*

PAUL: I seem to have moved away from doing work on the page into overseeing projects, but I don't necessarily need to stay in this area. If maybe in a year's time someone offers me a nice graphic novel I might be persuaded.

BOJAN: *Do you sense the time will come when the British creators will incline less towards the American market and publishers because of the much better and more lucrative situation here, in Britain?*

PAUL: I think that in terms of the creator's interest the bonus system's a lot better, a lot more established in America. And people are very bonus-conscious! When they come to the book or if they're offered a book, they want to know what and how the sales are and they'll get their calculators out and do the little sums to see what their page rate'll eventually be.

BOJAN: *Calculating their royalty in advance?*

PAUL: In a lot of cases, especially at Marvel, the royalty can make up the majority of the paycheck. The page-rate becomes secondary to the sales of the book. Creators in Britain are not used to this sort of reasoning . . . but we're re-writing the book on that.

BOJAN: *What is the understanding of British creators?*

PAUL: I don't think that the British creators really believe that a comic company is going to pay them much in the way of royalties. It's very different here because on DEATH'S HEAD all the creators got much more money on the royalty than they got on the payment. And if you worked in terms of actual page rate it would be phenomenal inside the British industry. It would create a sensation if we said *"We're paying that much a page"* on the outset.

BOJAN: *Which are the creator's rights here, like for example — when he or she creates something new, quite original and un-used concept, compared to his or her American peer?*

PAUL: While I was working for the Americans they changed their plan and they've been changing since I last worked for them. They've changed from paying a percentage of the profits they've made, to paying on actual cover-price of the book. They have also paid on sales over 100,000 only, and also on sales from the ground up. They adjust from time to time and I don't know exactly what they're doing now. What we are giving is 4% of the cover price above 50,000 sold. Now, as far as I know it's comparable to the American payments, but it's a slightly

From CAPTAIN AMERICA #313, Al Williamson inks Neary. A dream come true for Paul.

"Tom DeFalco has final say on how we use his characters."

A LONGSHOT GAMBLE, DARLIN', IF EVER I HEARD ONE.
HOW FORTUNATE, THEN, WE HAVE A "LONGSHOT" WITH US TO HELP PLAY IT.
HIS POWER IS HIS FANTASTIC LUCK. LET US HOPE IT SERVES US WELL.
AND IF NOT, LOGAN, THEN -- AS THE SAYING GOES--
--THIS IS AS GOOD A DAY AS ANY TO DIE.
AND THE BEST OF FRIENDS TO DO SO WITH.

Two more panels from X-MEN ANNUAL #11 — Davis and Neary.

smaller percentage being paid out. The important thing is that, as far as I know, it beats any existing British scheme. Our royalty agreement was made more with an eye to putting out a better royalty system than Fleetway, than it was to put out a royalty system that matched up with Marvel America.

BOJAN: *One thing has just occurred to me now . . . In Marvel USA where you have editors and editors-in-chief coming directly from the writer's positions, you come from the artist's profession!*

PAUL: It may look like that . . . in fact, most of the work that I was doing before I came here was not strictly to do with making drawings. I was working as a consultant at Fleetway which meant talking to young artists. It was a lot of thinking work, it was a lot of planning and analysis work and also I was writing for **Michael Bennet,** editor of CRISIS magazine. I was also writing MOTHER EARTH with **Bernie Jaye** for 2000 AD . . . so at the point when I came here I was working in other areas too. Rather a writer-artist with a consulting capacity, but certainly I didn't see myself as someone who earned a living from drawing.

BOJAN: *You're really a complete industry man . . . considering the medium of the sequential art, of course . . .*

PAUL: Everything you said is right! *(Laughter.)*

BOJAN: *Do we have here "Creating The Marvel Comics — The British Way"?*

PAUL: Yep. That's it.

BOJAN: *Are you free to expand to some parts of the foreign markets without the watching eye from across the Atlantic?*

PAUL: Yes, we want to syndicate our material in Europe and the strange thing is that the response to Marvel Comics across Europe is very different in each country, even in the countries you'd think are similar or touching each other on the map. We encountered various different requirements from the publishers that we present our work to for syndication. Some countries are just beginning to reprint Marvel material but they want to use the major heroes, they want to do SPIDER-MAN, they want to do HULK . . . and it's almost as if they're afraid to jump ahead to anything that's been produced recently. They want to concentrate on the heroes that have been the big hit at Marvel historically. And that's their right to do that. Some other countries, principally I think the Scandinavian countries, are interested in more modern concepts like HELL'S ANGEL because it's based in Chaos Theory, it's very much New Age in its outlook. And STAR COMICS in Italy, just like Scandinavian publishers they think it's modern.

BOJAN: *Shall we eventually see a rise of a new animation studio based in London? Is the TV market lucrative for this company?*

PAUL: I think it could be, but it's premature to ask that now, I think. If you look at Marvel USA, they were around for a long time before they got into the TV market.

BOJAN: *In a way you're really free to do many things on your own and on the other hand cope with the control from across the Big Water . . .*

PAUL: I think "The Control" is a wrong word. I don't want to upset them and they don't want to upset me. If they take any of my characters and use them in a way I'm not happy with, it is not good for anyone . . . and the reverse is certainly true also.

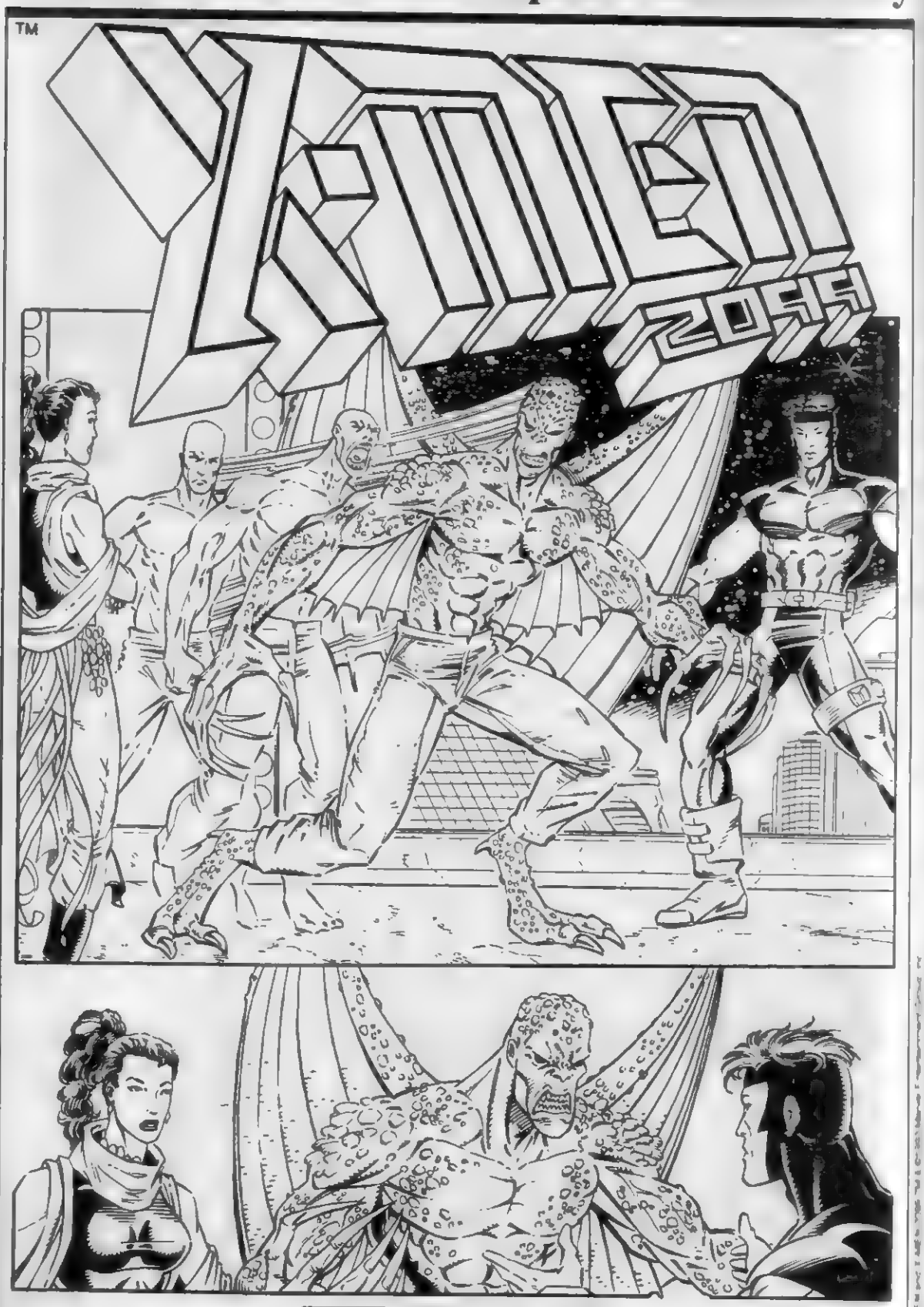
BOJAN: *So you have the final word, concerning that?*

PAUL: Tom DeFalco has the final say on how we use his characters and I'm sure he is not going to do anything to my characters that would go against the grain. We have a terrific working agreement. Who "has to do" what hasn't even come up.

The point is, as a creative person I wouldn't feel happy just taking Spider-Man, who has been set up in a certain direction by Marvel America for over 30 years, and doing something inappropriate.

The characters at Marvel have got their distinction among the different characters and there are rules and the guidelines they've adhered to in order to keep them separate from each other. I don't want to take a character they've set up and do something irresponsible with it.

"The 2099 books — the response has been very



"avorable and the series is deemed a success."

JOHN FRANCIS MOORE

On these pages (and throughout), the finished artwork from X-MEN 2099 #1. Pencils are by Ron Lim, inks by Adam Kubert.

The name John Francis Moore may not be well known to the legion of Marvel Comics fans, but that is about to change. John's first work for Marvel was developing the DOOM 2099 book for the 2099 series edited by Joey Cavalleri.

Before working for Marvel Moore's credits included such diverse titles as AMERICAN FLAGG, SUPERBOY, DICK TRACY for Disney, and IRONWOLF. John Francis Moore was also on staff and wrote several episodes for the FLASH television series as well as the SUPERBOY and HUMAN TARGET television shows.

John Francis Moore is about to become a household name for fans of Marvel mutant titles as the writer of the soon-to-be-released X-MEN 2099 book. John fills readers in as to the direction for the newest mutants on the block as well as introducing the main characters.

CHARLES D. NOVINSKIE: *The first thing I would have to ask is how you got involved with the X-MEN 2099 book.*

JOHN FRANCIS MOORE: There was a core group of 2099 books — RAVAGE, SPIDER-MAN, DOOM, and the PUNISHER. The response has been very favorable and the series has been deemed a

VITAL STATISTICS

Born: September 5, 1964; Charlotte, NC
Education: Art degree, California State University at Fullerton
Favorite Writers: Milton Caniff, Will Eisner, Howard Chaykin, Lester Bangs.
Hobbies: Playing guitar.

"It's easy to live in a major city and to think

CHARLES: *Unlike, say, the New Universe line attempted for the 25th anniversary of Marvel.*

JOHN: Exactly. There was the possibility, at least as far as public perception, to have this line of books perceived as another New Universe. The X-MEN 2099 book seemed like the next logical marketing move. With all of the 2099 books **Joey Cavalieri**, editor of the 2099 books, had solicited proposals from all of the different writers. A lot of writers, myself included, did proposals for X-MEN 2099 but none of the original ideas turned out to be what Joey or **Mark Gruenwald** had in mind for the series. It was **Cavalieri** and **Gruenwald** that developed an overview for the series and then Joey offered the book for me to script. It was a great assignment and I was glad to accept it. Since then, Joey and I have been further developing the characters and trying to figure out who they are and how they operate. We're working out how the book will feel. Joey is a great editor and a really smart guy. His editorial input has been great in the respect that he has helped me shear away my tendency to over-plot. On the X-MEN he's been a great editor.

CHARLES: *I found the choices in characters to introduce the 2099 series interesting. Wouldn't it have made more sense to introduce an X-MEN 2099 series as one of if not the first series titles in order to ensure success?*

JOHN: I can only speculate that since the 2099 books were seen as a risky proposition that they didn't want to have an X-MEN book and then have it fail. I don't think they would have wanted an X-MEN title associated with a failed series. Once again, Marvel operates on the theory that if something is successful they will ride that success with as many titles as possible.

CHARLES: *X-MEN 2099 makes you the writer on two 2099 titles, the other being DOOM 2099. Correct me if I'm wrong, wasn't DOOM 2099 your first work for Marvel?*

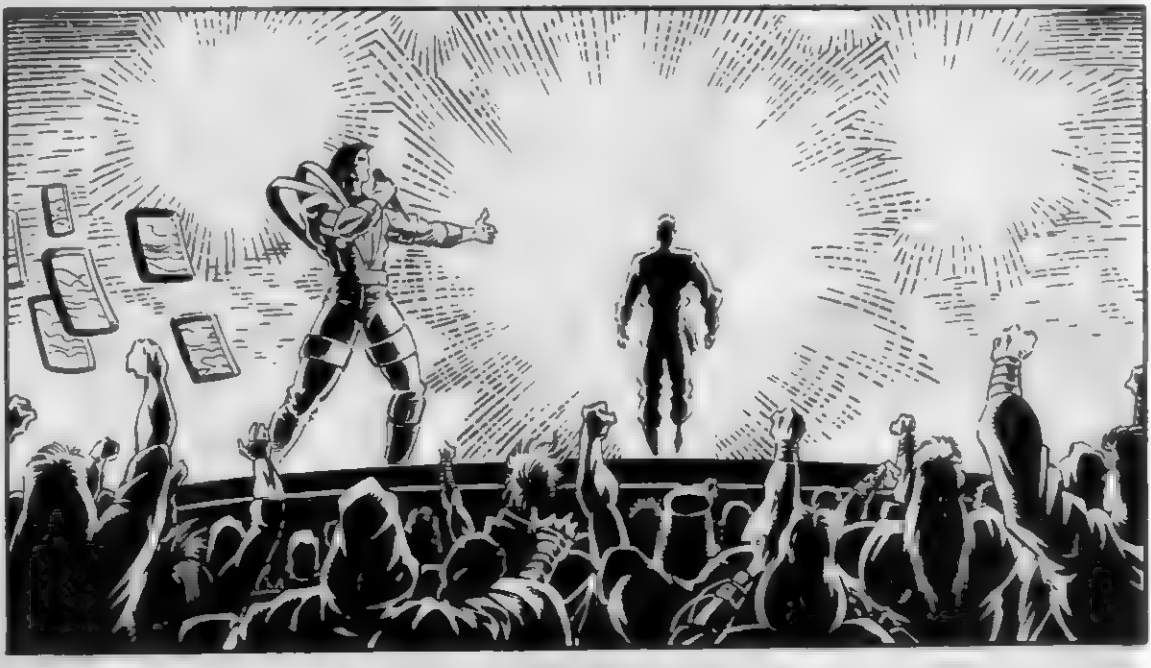
JOHN: That's correct. I met **Joey Cavalieri** in the summer of 1991. I had just returned from Italy to New York and **Kyle Baker** had a gathering of creators at his place one Sunday afternoon. I met Joey, who was still working at DC at the time, there. He in fact paid me one of the highest compliments I had ever received. Joey mentioned that he had written some SUPERBOY scripts after I had left the book and he said that in going to write the scripts he had writer's block after reading the books I did. That's about as good as it gets from your peers.

CHARLES: *Was DOOM 2099 already in the works when you signed on?*

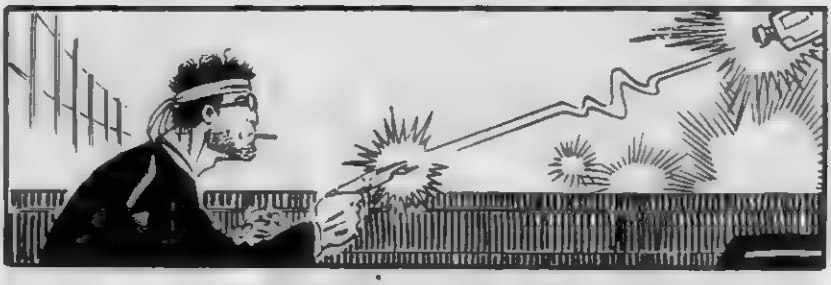
JOHN: The book was already planned as part of the 2099 series although it had gone through a number of permutations. I think it was originally something that **John Byrne** brought up, but I'm not sure. Obviously **Byrne** left the company so it all ended at that point and had to be reworked.

CHARLES: *Actually, I believe that was a project that both John Byrne and Stan Lee were working on and it was initially called WORLD OF TOMORROW. I think that was the tentative title.*

JOHN: Marvel decided that they wanted to do a future series line based somewhere in the not-too-distant future. We wanted the book to be close enough to the present that we didn't have to make everything up, and yet far enough away that we would have the leeway to do what we wanted. We basically wanted to have a clean slate to do as we pleased. As far as 2099, the year just had a nice sound to it. In the original plans Doom was seen as the sort of Machiavellian power in shadow of the 2099 universe. Once again they solicited proposals for the 2099 books. I came in at the last moment and DOOM 2099 was the last book scheduled to appear. When **Cavalieri** moved to Marvel he called and asked if I was interested in the book and at first I said no since I was in transition moving from LA to San Francisco. About two months later I decided that I really wanted to be doing a book. I called Joey and told him I had changed my mind and he said that we've assigned all but one book, DOOM 2099. And that was perfect because that was the book I wanted to do. I sent in a proposal that Joey liked. My idea was that rather than set out with Doom as an overwhelming power we should knock him down a few pegs and then watch him build him-



the rest of the world thinks the way you do."



self back up. The plan is to build him slowly up to the superpower of 2099 that he currently is.

CHARLES: *I like the fact that in DOOM 2099 you've kept us guessing as to Doom's true identity and how it relates to the present-day Doom.*

JOHN: I think the strength of the DOOM 2099 book is that the character is related to the current Marvel universe without having a direct umbilical to the present. It also gives me enough leeway to refer to throwaway references and asides for the book.

CHARLES: *Getting back to the X-MEN 2099 book. — It is scheduled to be out when?*

JOHN: The book will be out in August.

CHARLES: *The main question on everyone's mind has to be, who are the X-Men of X-MEN 2099?*

JOHN: The leader of the X-MEN is the former outlaw gang member named Xi-an Chi Xan. Xi-an is basically the equivalent of a biker who has had a religious vision. He decides that the world is in need of restructuring and that he is going to play a major role in that restructuring. He is a mutant that has a misshapen hand that can destroy things on a molecular level. As they say, that will be both his blessing and his curse. He is the equivalent of Professor X, Cable, or Magneto in respect to his relationship with the rest of the X-Men 2099 although he is not a father figure but rather a peer. Consequently, while some of the X-Men are incredibly loyal to him, others have less of an unbreakable loyalty. All of the X-Men are committed to their own form of change in society. Some have plans to carry out environmental monkey-wrenching, other media piracy; they all have an activist's agenda. These X-Men will be far less reactive in their quest to change the world.

CHARLES: *Where will their base of operations be?*

JOHN: They don't have a permanent base of operations right now but rather a locale. They will be drifting across the American southwest in a van called The Experience. In my version of the western U.S. in 2099 the United States has been divided up. Alchemax is the political power for the eastern seaboard, but as you travel further west you have a loose-knit group of political states known as the Federated States of America. It is basically a group of political and corporate entities allied against Alchemax.

It's easy to live in a major city and to think that the rest of the United States or the rest of the world thinks the way you do. America is a wide-open place and it's very evident when you travel the southwest. There is a lot of room for a lot of different people with a lot of different life styles. That is sort of the type of society I want to explore in the X-MEN 2099 book. I want to give the X-Men room to move around in and get that exposure to different cultures. It will also give me the chance to explore other avenues rather than just corporate villains.

CHARLES: *So far we know that the leader of the X-Men will be Xi-an Chi Xan and that they will be roaming the desert southwest. What about the other X-Men?*

JOHN: There is a character called Meanstreak who is an accelerated man. He is able to move at super-speeds. His name is Henri Huang and he is someone who dropped out of Alchemax's corporate university realizing he didn't want to be a part of the corporate machine. While he is a genius and electronic wizard he flunked out intentionally so that he would be seen as useless by the corporate powers that be. He will be part of a group of video pirates known as the Videogoths.

There is also a female mutant by the name of Krystalin. She will basically represent the New Age Earth Mother of the group and she will be able to project crystalline objects. Her concerns will be that humanity isn't lost in the fight. She will try to prevent bloodshed whenever she can.

CHARLES: *We seem to have counterparts to the present-day X-Men. Will we have a corresponding character for Wolverine?*

JOHN: I would have to say Bloodhawk would be the obvious comparison to Wolverine. Bloodhawk is a loner that really has no intention of being a part of the group. He is an antisocial desert hermit of sorts who decides that humanity isn't worth saving but that the Earth is.

The second in command for the group is the woman Shakti Haddad, who is also known as Cerebra, who is able to identify mutants without the use of machines. She is also able to affect the basic brain functions such as motor skills. While she can't control someone's mind, she can place a neural block over your motor skills in order to take you out. I see her as the coldest member of the group. She will always take the analytical approach rather than an emotional avenue.

There is also a girl that is a 16-year-old runaway named Serpentina and whom I

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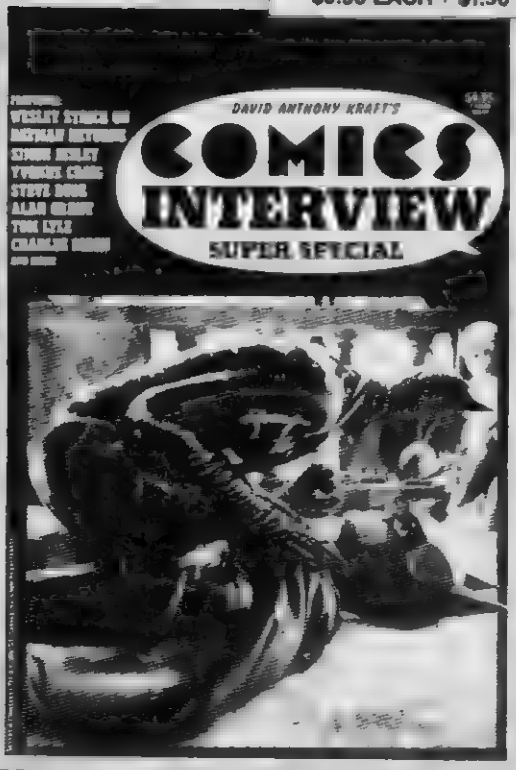

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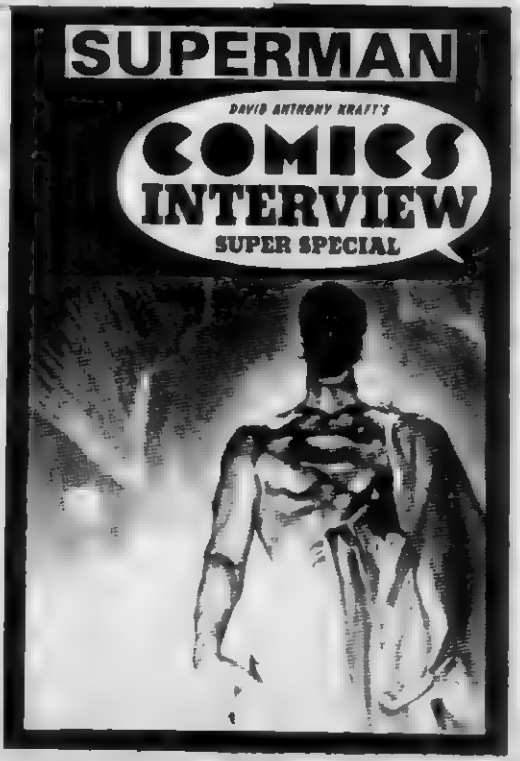

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"You'll see one of the X-Men 2099 evolve into a villain."

refer to as Tins. She has a really malleable body, hence the name. She is committed to Xi-an's vision because she sees him as the person that saved her from a horrible life on the streets. She bonds with Timothy Fitzgerald, who first introduces us to the group and will be known later on as Skullfire. Tim was basically a corporate drone, a person that would never ascend the corporate ladder. Skullfire's mutant powers are ambient energy absorption which he can store and later release. His abilities manifest themselves rather suddenly and he really can't control them. Tim's powers manifest themselves under times of stress so he can no longer work his job. He eventually ends out on the street and is sustained only by the manifestation of his power. Tim is found on the streets by Cerebra and is invited to join a gathering, which is a meeting for discards of corporate society. Xi-an challenges these people to choose their own destinies and he uses the X-Men as his strike force. Xi-an is aware of the past history of the X-Men and he uses that knowledge to build his X-Men while defining his blueprint for the world. In some ways Xi-an is as single-minded as Doom is.

CHARLES: *Does that cover all of the X-MEN 2099 cast of characters?*

JOHN: There's a character named Metalhead, who is a metal mimetic. He can absorb the properties of any metal he comes in contact with. He is actually a musician who is a syntho-percussionist.

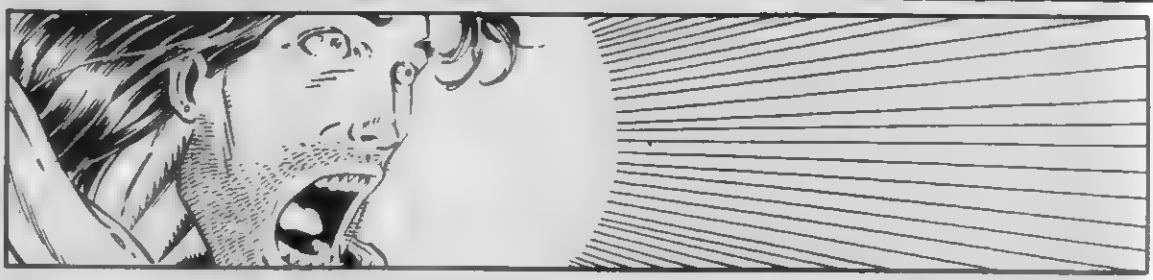
CHARLES: *That's an incredible cast of characters for a first issue. What format will the book be in?*

JOHN: The first issue is 23 pages of story with a card stock and foil cover just like the first DOOM 2099 book.

CHARLES: *X-Men have been known for their classic adversaries. X-MEN #1 introduced the world to Magneto, one of the Marvel Universe's most enduring and powerful villains. Is there a classic villain for the X-Men 2099?*

JOHN: What you'll see is that one of the original X-Men 2099 members will

"I'm staying away from Wolverine. That all gets back



evolve into a major villain. That character is Junkpile. Before Xi-an had his vision to form the X-Men he was a member of the gang known as the Lawless. In that group was Junkpile who is a mutant that has the ability to reshape his body with scrap metal. If he has an arm blown off his arm will be recreated using whatever scrap metal is available. Junkpile is less than thrilled about Xi-an's change. Junkpile feels that his mutant abilities give him the privilege to live as he wants to live and that the rest of the world is just cattle to him. Junkpile ultimately plays Judas to the rest of the group and Xi-an is shot in the first issue because of Junkpile's attitude towards the X-Men. The first three-issue arc is a storyline I've been calling "Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas." That isn't the official title.

CHARLES: *What is the official title for the first storyline?*

JOHN: There really isn't one. Story titles are a bitch. *(Laughter.)* Joey and I go back and forth on the Doom titles quite a bit.

CHARLES: *Will there be any ties to the current X-Men?*

JOHN: No.

CHARLES: *By design?*

JOHN: Yes, and there are two reasons for that. The first is a general 2099 editorial edict which is not to conflict with any of the current continuity. The general rule is not to undercut anything that teams on current books are doing. Along those lines, we probably won't ever establish whether or not the Doom of 2099 is the current Doom. We don't want to say he survived into the 21st century.

Another reason we won't see a connection between the X-Men groups is the fact that it's a political thing. **Bob Harras** is in charge of the current X-MEN titles and **Joey Cavalieri** is in charge of the 2099 books. In terms of day-to-day maintenance it's simpler that we stay in our corner and they stay in their country.

CHARLES: *That may negate this next question, but 2099 isn't that far away. When we look at the current turn of events for mutants in the X-books things look pretty bleak. Then all of a sudden here it is, 2099, and mutants are alive and well. How do you explain that without destroying any continuity?*

JOHN: We get around that by making references to something known as The Great Purge which is a point in time where nearly an entire generation of mutants either die or disappear. Of course we're being real vague about when that happens. It does explain why there aren't a vast number of mutants in 2099 like there are today. Later on in the series the X-Men will go in search of what happened to these mutants. Like I said, this is a future storyline, but the mutants of 2099 will learn that there was at one time an underground railroad for mutants. We won't spell out what really happens, but rather we'll be rather oblique. My theory, if you look at history in general, is that we lose track of the day-to-day politics of life and the heroes of 100 years ago. There's no reason to believe that the generation of 2099 will be aware of or even care what was important to us. While some people

o not wanti[illegible]uity."

will be known, say Xavier and Magneto, we'll hear mention of names that aren't recognizable to us because obviously things will have happened between the years 1993 and 2099.

CHARLES: *What about the possibility of a character like Cable showing up? A character that has time-travel capabilities.*

JOHN: I have no plans to bring Cable in. It would be an obvious choice but right now there are no plans.

CHARLES: *It seems also plausible that Wolverine could survive the years. Why not a Wolverine 2099 book?*

JOHN: To tell you the truth, I'm staying away from Wolverine. Wolverine is the big character that I'm staying away from. That all gets back to not wanting to mess with the current continuity. To say that Wolverine survived all of those years would take away from the suspense of asking yourself, "Can Wolverine die?"

CHARLES: *Why not mention who the artist and inker will be for the book?*

JOHN: Sure. **Ron Lim** will be doing pencils. Ron is of course a factory in the way he can turn out pages. Part of getting to know these characters is getting to see how Ron has drawn them. Inking will be **Adam Kubert,** who gives Ron's pencils a little bit of a tooth. Together I think the book is very sharp looking.

CHARLES: *And of course Joey Cavalieri is the editor.*

JOHN: Joey is the editor on all of the 2099 books. And I have to say that he is really earning his pay. He does things that editors are supposed to be; he isn't just traffic manager.

CHARLES: *Any goals for the book?*

JOHN: Just that people read it, enjoy it, and that it stands on its own. Let's face it, X-MEN 2099 is the obvious marketing ploy. I hope that people read it and see some weight and substance to the book. I like it, but you know, I'm writing it.

CHARLES: *Does the fact that the X-MEN title is coming out after the 2099 line has been established make it a more legitimate title as opposed to people just rushing out and buying an unknown line of books just because it has X-Men in it?*

JOHN: I think so. I think we'll get X-MEN readers as well as 2099 readers. From the letters we've received readers that are picking up one 2099 book are picking up at least one other 2099 book.

CHARLES: *I almost hate to ask. When will we see the 2099 crossover?*

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BY CHANGING THE TEXTURE OF HIS BODY, HE CHANGES THE SOUND BOUNCING OFF HIS BODY

AMAZING ABSOLUTELY AMAZING.
IF YOU THINK HE'S GREAT, WAIT TILL YOU MEET XIIAN!
HE'LL DO MORE THAN IMPRESS YOU--HE'LL CHANGE YOUR LIFE!

JOHN: Funny you should ask that. We're going to do the inevitable 2099 crossover this winter starting in SPIDER-MAN 2099 and ending in SPIDER-MAN 2099 the following month. The storyline crossover will be titled "The Fall of the Hammer." It will run through all of the 2099 books that month.

CHARLES: *How did you first get involved in writing comics?*

JOHN: I was an assistant for **Howard Chaykin** when I was a junior in college back in 1985. I was the background assistant for him on THE SHADOW. My first professional credit was as colorist on the **Paul Smith** issues of AMERICAN FLAGG. Then I ended up taking over the writing chores during the time that Howard had assembled a studio to do AMERICAN FLAGG.

CHARLES: *Besides working on DOOM 2099 and X-MEN 2099, any other work you'd like to mention?*

JOHN: Sure, thank you. I'm working on a Duke Stratosphere story with **Kyle Baker,** Duke Stratosphere being one of the characters being introduced in DOOM. That story is for the UNLIMITED 2099 book. I'll also have a book from DC out in October called THE DEVIL'S WORKSHOP, which is Batman and Houdini. I wrote that with **Howard Chaykin.** I also have another one-shot prestige book from DC called UNDER A YELLOW SUN: A NOVEL BY CLARK KENT.

BACK ISSUES

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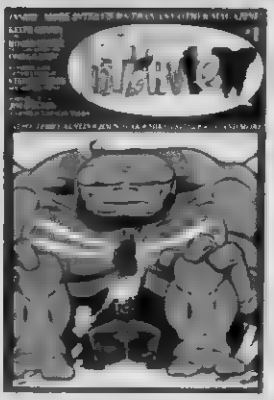

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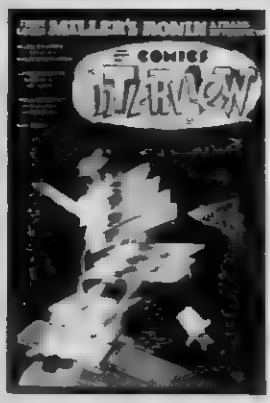

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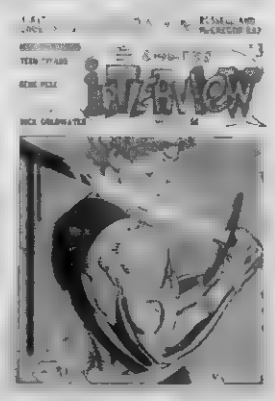

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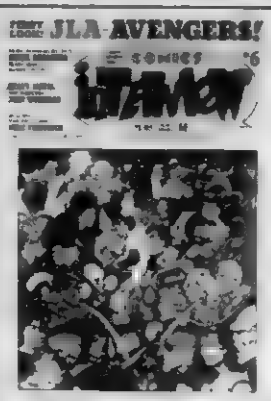

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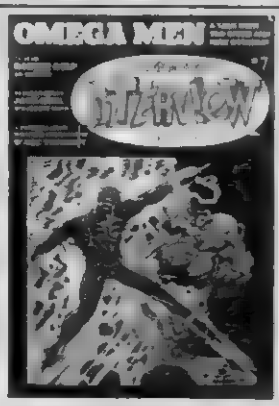

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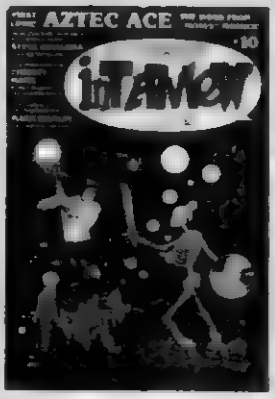

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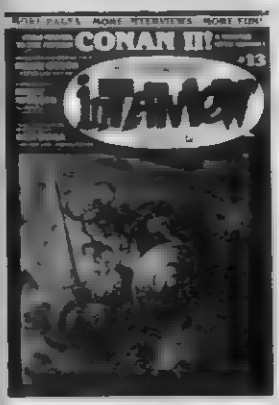

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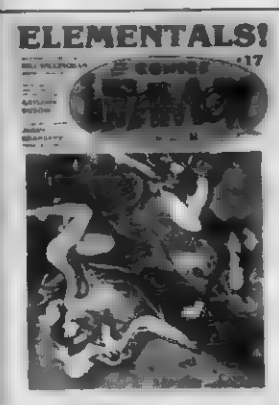

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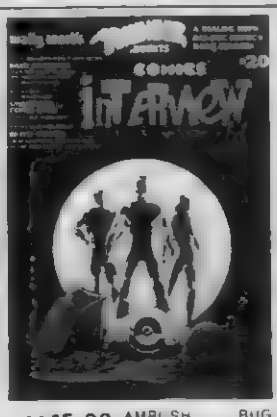

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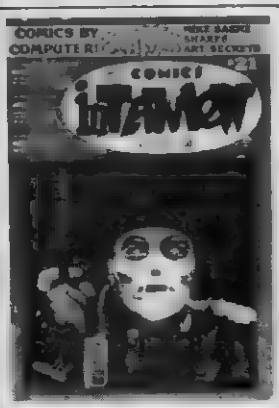

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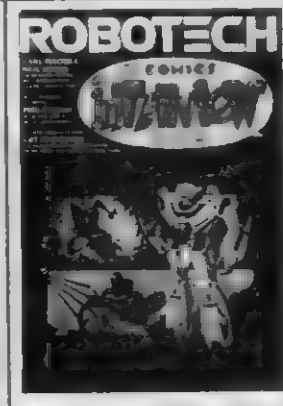

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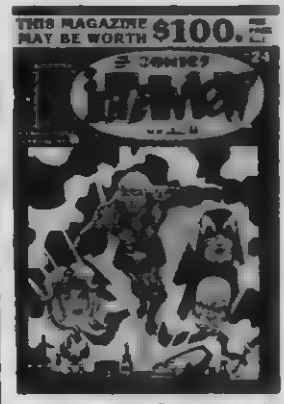

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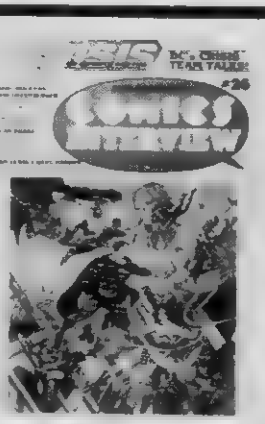

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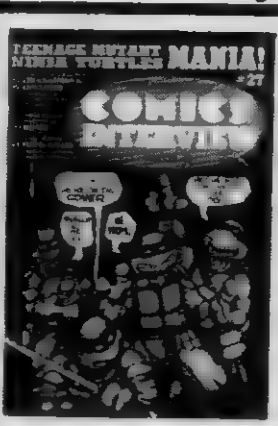

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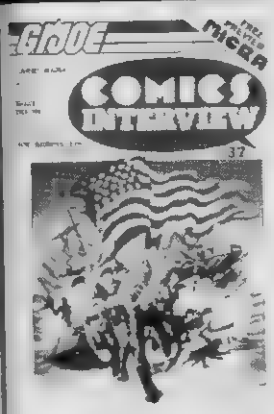

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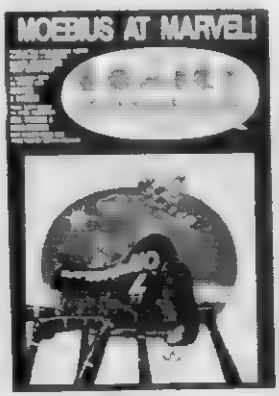

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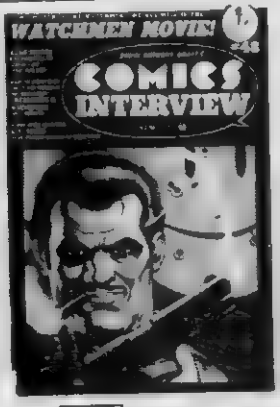

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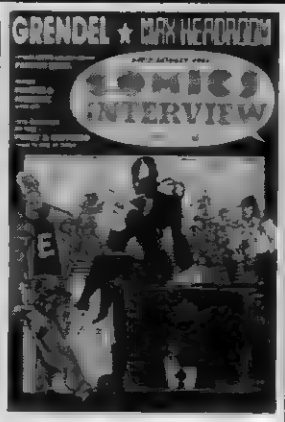

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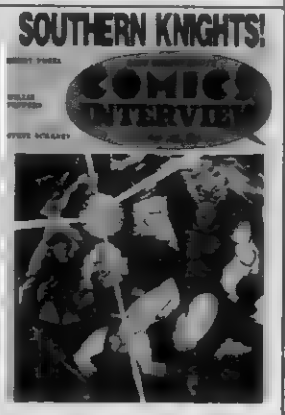

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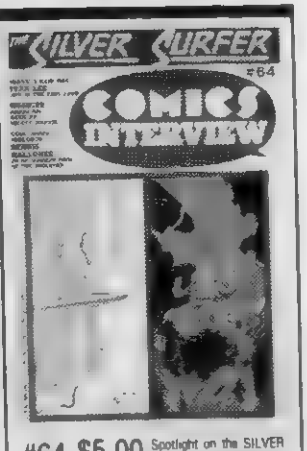

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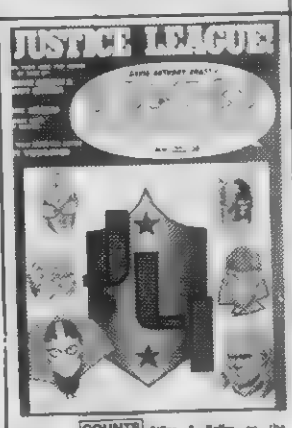

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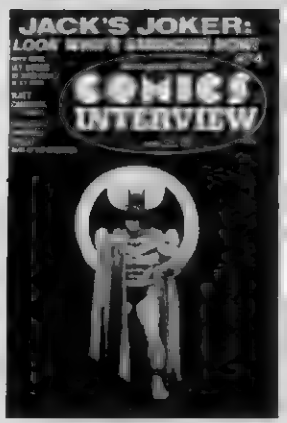

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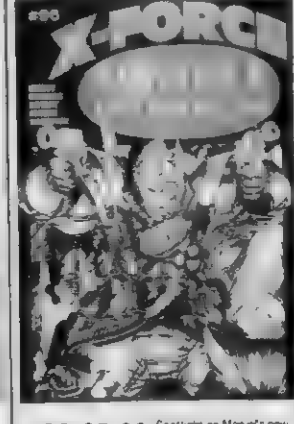

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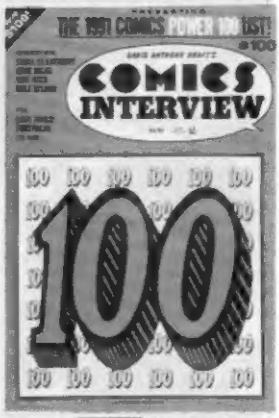

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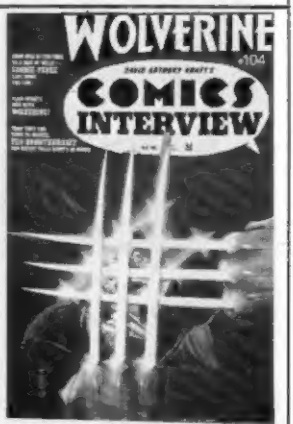

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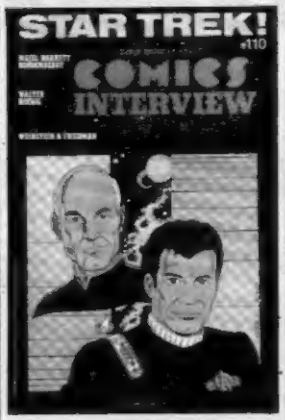

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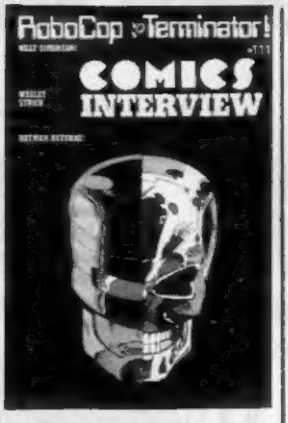

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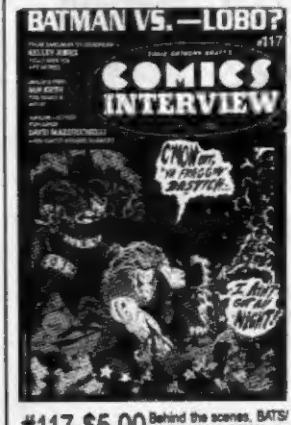

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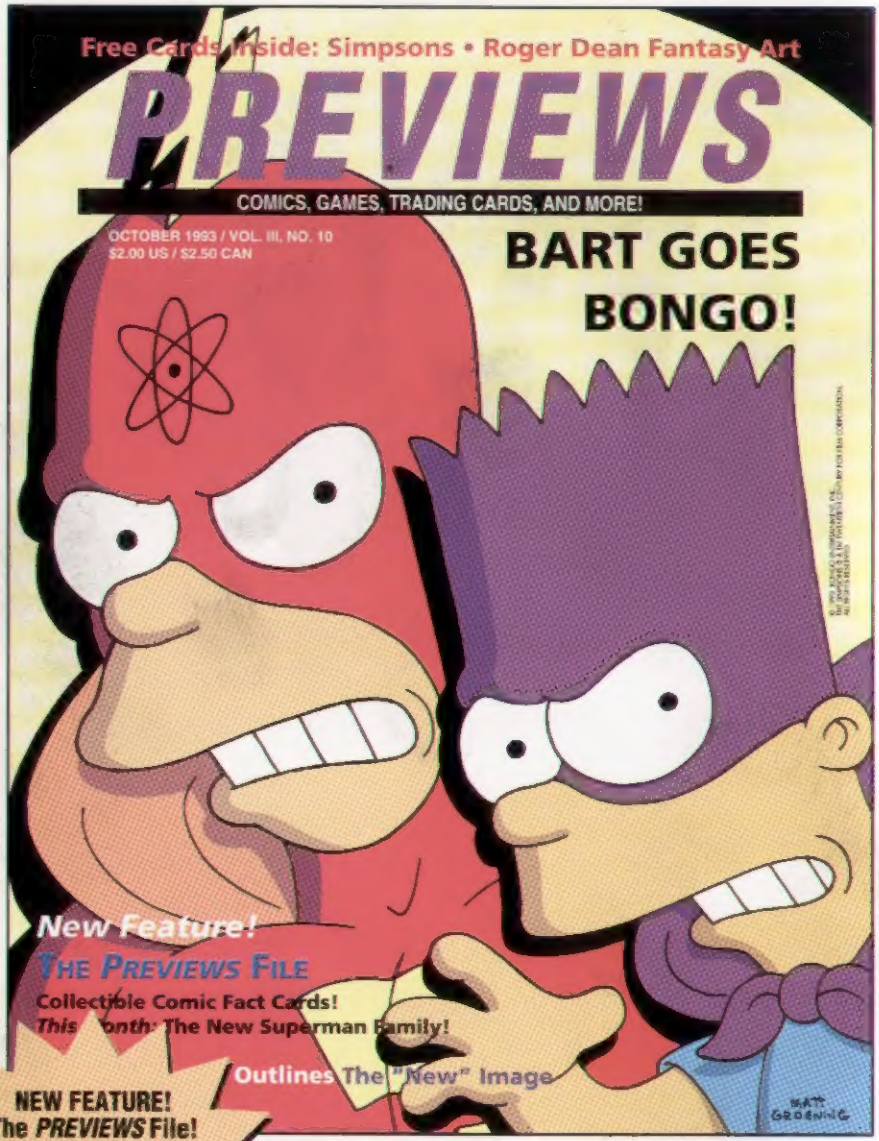
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